

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

**To:** Communities and Partnership Committee

**Meeting Date:** 2 July 2020

**From:** Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Partnerships

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Key decision:** No

**Outcome:** The Council's response to COVID-19 and our strategies for countywide 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
- the specific response from services for which this Committee has responsibility
- work of the countywide COVID-19 Coordination Hub
- the approach being taken to support local outbreak control
- the approach to supporting work to ensure outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are not impacted by their race or background

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus;
- b) Note the approach being taken to local outbreak management and control, including the NHS Test and Trace programme; and
- c) Note and endorse the approach being taken to ensure that outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are not impacted by their race or background.

<b>Officer contact:</b>	<b>Member contacts:</b>
Name: Adrian Chapman	Name: Cllr Steve Criswell
Post: Service Director	Post: Chairman
Email: <a href="mailto:adrian.chapman@peterborough.gov.uk">adrian.chapman@peterborough.gov.uk</a>	Email: <a href="mailto:steve.criswell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">steve.criswell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Tel: 07920 160441	Tel: 01223 706385

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. This report provides updates relevant to this service committee on the Council's ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic, our work with partners and communities to protect the most vulnerable, and our developing work to help Cambridgeshire to recover from this unprecedented emergency.
- 1.2. Officers and teams continue to work closely with our communities, partners and providers to develop appropriate operational responses to new guidance as it is issued. Further details of the Council's response is in service committee COVID-19 update reports: [Council Meetings](#)
- 1.3. The Council Senior Leadership Team continues to run a 'Gold Command' Incident Management Team at least twice weekly to co-ordinate our response. The Local Resilience Forum (LRF), a partnership of local agencies, continues to hold a Strategic Co-ordinating Group at least twice weekly to co-ordinate the multi-agency response.
- 1.4. The Council's Recovery Framework was endorsed by General Purposes Committee on 14 May and a Recovery Board has been established, with the first meeting having taken place on 10 June. The Senior Management Team member chairing this board is the Director for Business Improvement and Development, Amanda Askham, and all Executive Directors, Service Directors and Corporate Heads of Service are members of the recovery group.
- 1.5. The Local Resilience forum has also stood up a Recovery Coordinating Group to co-ordinate multi-agency actions. This group is jointly chaired by Huntingdonshire District Council Managing Director, Jo Lancaster, and South Cambridgeshire District Council Chief Executive, Liz Watts.
- 1.6. The Council continues to operate all essential services, with staff working from home wherever possible. Some services remain partially closed in line with government guidance and social distancing measures and are offering online services where possible. Plans to safely and gradually reopen services are being developed with partners through the LRF Restoration Group.

## **2. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- 2.1 This Committee has responsibility for both its 'business as usual' services, and for oversight of the Countywide Coordination Hub. The next section summarises the progress made in both aspects. The last meeting of this Committee was just two weeks ago, and so updates are more limited than normal. However, at the request of the Committee, this report does include more detailed information on the Local Outbreak Control Plan, and on our proposed work to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents, who have been disproportionately affected nationally by the pandemic.

### **2.2 Cambridgeshire Libraries and Archives**

- 2.2.1 In accordance with the national guidance, we are anticipating being able to begin to reopen our libraries and archives services from 4 July. Our reopening plans follow further more detailed guidance provided by both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and Libraries Connected (formerly, the Society for Chief Librarians).

2.2.2 A separate, more detailed report to this Committee provides further information about our reopening plans for these services.

## **2.3 Cambridgeshire Skills**

2.3.1 Alongside our current digital offer, curriculum planning will be complete by 29 June, and we will then go to market with an online, blended and face-to-face skills offer during the second week of July. This will support a safe and proportionate reopening of our March and Ely bases, as well as community-based provision in other settings when it is safe to do so.

2.3.2 In recognition of the impact that the pandemic has had on some households, there is much provision planned around employability to help support our residents back into work.

## **2.4 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Services**

2.4.1 A range of services and organisations, twelve in total, have benefitted from part of the national package of funding to support victims of domestic abuse during the pandemic. The total funding allocated to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is £288k specifically to fund:

- Domestic abuse services already commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) (£144k)
- Sexual violence support services, including those already commissioned by the PCC as well as those that are not (£72k)
- Domestic abuse services not currently commissioned by the PCC (£72k)

## **2.5 Cambridgeshire Registration Service**

2.5.1 From 1 June, restrictions on birth registrations were lifted. By 26 June, 730 births were registered from a backlog of around 1,600. The service is also now offering appointments for urgent notices, in line with the national guidance.

2.5.2 On 29 June, the Government published detailed Guidance for Small Marriages and Civil Partnerships<sup>1</sup>. The guidance sets out how marriages and civil partnerships can be carried out “in a manner that is safe and in line with social distancing guidelines, in order to minimise the risk of exposure to infection for all individuals attending the marriage or civil partnership, including those who work at the venues”.

2.5.3 In summary, the guidance states that:

- “During all activity linked to the marriage ceremony or civil partnership formation, all parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines. From 4 July, 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable), are acceptable”
- “From 4 July, gatherings of more than 30 people will be permitted but only in certain public places as set out in law. This will include all licensed venues where legal marriage ceremonies can take place however it is strongly advised that numbers are restricted to 30 for public health reasons”
- “Those operating venues following COVID-19 secure guidelines should take additional steps to ensure the safety of the public and prevent large gatherings or mass events from taking place”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

2.5.4 We are now reviewing the guidance in detail, and will ensure that our plans are communicated as swiftly as possible.

## 2.6 Coroner Service

2.6.1 At time of writing, our plan to recommence inquests with juries from 1 July remains on track. Despite the lockdown, the service has been able to hold 103 live hearings, mostly via Skype where no jury was necessary. A backlog of cases which do require a jury has inevitably built – 65 cases in total – but our plans to double courtroom capacity by opening a facility in Peterborough (to cover the north of the county), and additional provision in Huntingdon (to cover the south of the county) will help to move through this backlog in a timely manner, vital to support bereaved families.

## 2.7 Countywide COVID-19 Coordination and Response Hub

2.7.1 The Communities and Partnerships service directorate continues to lead the work of the Countywide Coordination Hub, which has been established to:

- co-ordinate the distribution of support to the shielded group of residents
- help ensure that services provided by key workers are sustained at safe and appropriate levels through the redeployment of staff and the deployment of volunteers
- ensure with our partners that we are making the best use possible of all available resources to minimise anxiety, to co-ordinate social action, and to ensure those most vulnerable are benefitting from appropriate community support
- work closely with District/City Hubs to ensure all vulnerable people are supported

The Countywide Hub is focussing on maintaining the formal oversight of support necessary for the shielded group of residents, whilst the district/city hubs are supporting other vulnerable residents and supporting community-led action.

2.7.2 On 22 June, the Government announced changes to the advice for shielding residents:

- from 6 July anyone shielding:
  - can, if they wish, meet in a group of up to six people outdoors whilst maintaining strict social distancing
  - no longer needs to observe social distancing with other members of their household
  - who lives alone or who has dependent children can form a support bubble with one other household
- from 1 August the government will be advising that shielding will be paused. From this date, the government is advising people who are shielding to adopt strict social distancing rather than full shielding measures, which means they may wish to go out to more places and see more people. In practice this means that:
  - anyone shielding can go to work, if they cannot work from home, as long as the business is COVID-safe
  - children who are clinically extremely vulnerable can return to their education settings if they are eligible
  - anyone shielding can go outside to buy food, go to places of worship and for exercise

Despite this however, anyone shielding is still at risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus, so the national advice is to stay at home where possible and, if they do go out, to follow strict social distancing guidance.

2.7.3 Further details of these changes can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

2.7.4 At time of writing, there were 32,357 residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who should be shielding, 19,058 of whom have registered as such. Key performance data includes the following:

- % of first-time calls made to newly registered people within 7 days: 91%
- Average number of days before first-time calls are made to newly registered people: 4.1
- Outgoing telephone contacts made to shielded people in the past 14 days: 6,646
- Total number of digital forms requesting help resolved to date: 2,586, of which:
  - 1,790 relate to food (69%)
  - 570 relate to medicines (22%)
  - 219 relate to emotional health and wellbeing (8%)
  - 175 relate to household maintenance (7%)
  - 76 relate to personal care (3%)
  - 401 relate to other forms of help (16%)(n.b. more than one request for help can be included per form)
- Total number of incoming calls received on the 0345 number to date: 6,662
- Total number of general enquiry emails resolved to date: 1,731
- Total number of shielded enquiry emails resolved to date: 3,078
- Total number of national food deliveries in the last 14 days: 7,389
- Total number of people receiving a general 7-day Hub food parcel to date: 2,706
- Total number of people receiving a specialist 7-day hub food parcel to date: 875
- Total number of referrals made to the Red Cross Befriending Service: 776

2.7.5 Community outreach support continues for those who need weekly/regular help. There have been 23 completed requests for support in the last 2 weeks. These continue to be for small food shops, click and collect, picking up electricity cards etc. In one case, the community outreach in North Huntingdonshire assisted the CCC Rights of Way team and a self-isolating resident who needed temporary rights of way notices printed, laminated and erected at points of access into her garden.

2.7.6 Scams Awareness fortnight ran from 15 – 28 June and our officers were busy putting out regular social media messages on behalf of the Against Scams Partnership (CAPASP) to help keep our residents safe. Each day, a minimum of two Facebook posts were made as well as regular tweets to spread the word about being #scamaware, with some tweets resulting in 1401 impressions thus far.

2.7.7 The Coordination Hub has started to make regular calls to individuals supported by the council's Sensory Team. At the start of the pandemic, the sensory team put together a list of vulnerable residents with sensory impairment who may have required extra support during the crisis. Using this list, the team has been making weekly calls to offer advice and support. So far, the service provided by the sensory team has been extremely successful with the number of people requiring support reducing from 400 to 100 since the beginning of the crisis. Moving forward, the Hub will continue to support those that have been identified as requiring support, the majority of whom are people that are still isolating and could benefit from the befriending services the Hub can provide. By taking on this service the Hub can ensure that those with sensory impairment and who may be struggling can

continue to receive the support they need and over time be linked in to more long term local support.

2.7.8 Finally, the weekly 'Highlights from the Hubs' newsletter continues to be published, the latest editions of which can be found at the following links:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/2906017>

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/2919dc0>

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/292bbf3>

## **2.8 Understanding and Acting on Inequalities Faced by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Residents**

2.8.1 In the June COVID-19 Committee report, reference was made to the impact of the virus on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, where research has shown that the impact on BAME communities is particularly disproportionate. The report went on to say that the cross-cutting nature of this Committee, coupled with its already-existing focus on tackling poverty and multiple deprivation, positions it well to ensure this disproportionality is not experienced in other factors that may affect the health, wellbeing and social mobility of our BAME residents.

2.8.2 The Chairman has asked that the cross-party Tackling Poverty and Multiple Deprivation working group be asked to consider this as part of its work, and it will begin doing so when it meets on 20 July. The working group is already focussed on four key themes:

- increasing household income and reducing household costs
- improving literacy, increasing education standards, and improving adult skills
- strengthening families and communities
- promoting long term economic growth

The group will now be asked to consider these themes through the lens of our BAME communities, to determine whether they are even more disadvantaged as a result of their race and background, in the same way they have been adversely affected as a result of COVID-19.

2.8.3 The work seeks to reaffirm our already existing commitment to ensuring that our staff and residents are not excluded, disadvantaged, or abused as a result of their race or background. We will also want to develop a more detailed understanding of the Public Health England research that shows how BAME people, as well as some other groups, have been more adversely affected by COVID-19. This work will include analysing the intelligence and considering how it has impacted on Cambridgeshire's residents, so we can make sure we do all we can, with our partners, to reduce this inequality.

2.8.4 Although the Council has a strong track record of tackling inequality and disadvantage in our organisation, including for example the work of our Members' Equality and Diversity Group, our officer Equalities and Diversity Action Group, and our own policies and procedures to ensure that no member of staff is adversely affected by their race or background, we now want to extend that work even further, taking the learning from the COVID-19 reports to build a deep understanding of the ways in which our own BAME residents' lives are affected by their race and backgrounds.



2.8.5 The group's work will be supported by the whole council; services will be asked to identify specific information and intelligence about the experiences of BAME residents when accessing their services, and an interim report from the group will be presented to the Committee in the next few weeks.

## **2.9 Local Outbreak Control**

2.9.1 All local areas are required to submit to Government an agreed Local Outbreak Control Plan, which sets out the approach to managing localised outbreaks of COVID-19 and supporting the NHS Test and Trace programme. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough plan was approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board Whole System Joint Sub Committee at its meeting on 29 June. A copy of that version is attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.9.2 The plan will be supported by a standard operating procedure, which will describe in detail the ways in which we will respond to outbreaks and support people who are tested positive for COVID-19 and/or who are traced by the NHS Test and Trace service.

2.9.3 Oversight of the outbreak control measures is the responsibility of the multi-agency Health Protection Board which has been established as part of the response phase to the pandemic. The Board has a number of workstreams with clearly defined roles, described in the plan at **Appendix 1**.

2.9.4 To provide political ownership and public engagement and reassurance on local outbreak control plans and their implementation across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, a Member-led Engagement Board has been established, and again the details of this and its membership can be found in the plan at **Appendix 1**.

2.9.5 There is a vital role for councillors as well as communities in the delivery of the plan, most notably:

- to support the effective delivery of the NHS Test and Trace service by promoting compliance and ensuring people who need to self-isolate have the support in place needed to be able to do so
- to share intelligence and help in the response to localised outbreaks, including reassuring residents, supporting affected businesses, and helping to minimise the escalation of the outbreak
- to support the general communications necessary to ensure that everyone continues to follow the national and local guidance, including social distancing measures

2.9.6 To specifically support the local approach to the NHS Test and Trace programme, the council produced the public-facing guide which can be found at **Appendix 2**.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no material changes to report in this report compared to the information provided in the June report. As a reminder however, the financial consequences of the pandemic within the remit of this Committee include the following key points:

- The Coroner Service will incur additional costs when it begins to hold jury inquests once again, and we will need to invest in additional assistant coroner capacity to help remove the increasing backlog of cases as quickly as possible
- Similarly, there is a significant backlog of registrations and ceremonies to deal with in the Registration Service, and this will result in the need for additional staff capacity. The

service is also experiencing a significant reduction in income

- Both Cambridgeshire Skills and Cambridgeshire Libraries rely on income generated through room hire and other services; in the current climate, this income is not being received
- There are also some direct costs associated with the work of the Countywide Hub, notably the supply of food and essential supplies
- Finally, the council has so far invested £100k in funding to the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation Coronavirus Fund. This fund is providing urgent financial help to groups that are directly supporting communities impacted by COVID-19

#### **4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 4.1 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.

#### **5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Following the Government's recovery plans for the UK, it is important for people to get back to school and work, for communities and services to rebuild and for businesses to reopen. As a Council, we will need to carefully interpret guidance as it comes through from central government, and work with partners and communities to ensure that we restart Cambridgeshire at the right time and pace and only when it is safe to do so.
- 5.2 The Council's financial forecasts have changed dramatically since a balanced budget was set in February 2020. Whilst it is too early to predict the full financial impact of fighting COVID-19, we know that we need to continue lobbying government for further funding and maintain strong financial management if we are to emerge from this period with the financial stability we had achieved pre-COVID-19.

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