

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

**To:** Communities and Partnership Committee

**Meeting Date:** 18 June 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
- the work of the countywide COVID-19 Coordination Hub

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

**Note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.**

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## 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. COVID-19 continues to spread across the world and in the UK. At 4<sup>th</sup> June, there had been 6.3 million confirmed cases and more than 380,000 deaths globally, with 280,000 confirmed cases and nearly 40,000 deaths in the UK. Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 1,979 confirmed cases and 365 deaths occurred between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> May.
- 1.3. The Prime Minister addressed the nation on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May with a new message for the public to Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives. This was followed by publication on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May of the Government's recovery strategy "OUR PLAN TO REBUILD". This has been followed by further guidance on schools, supporting the care sector and reopening of public spaces and town centres.
- 1.4. 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](#)
- 1.5. 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.
- 1.6. The Council's Recovery Framework was endorsed by General Purposes Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> May and a Recovery Board has been established, with the first meeting scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 1.7. 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.
- 1.8. 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. Household Waste and Recycling Centres, Primary Schools and Early Years Settings have reopened successfully with some restrictions, temporary guidelines and social distancing measures in place.

## **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.

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

2.2.1 Our digital offer continues to expand its readership. Our flagship lending app - RBDigital - has seen more than 2,000 new unique users since lockdown.

2.2.2 The Library at Home service has restarted with 42 deliveries to some of our most vulnerable residents, with little or no other forms of recreation. The service is being delivered with full compliance of the social distancing guidelines, and including a safe and well chat. The Library Van service is also maintaining its delivery service to corporate sites as well as delivery of key IT equipment to shielded /self-isolating colleagues.

2.2.3 The Library Presents 'In Your House' programme is now in full swing, with the team focussed on promoting the programme which has 19 projects, with 52 different 'events', all funded through Arts Council grant. The programme commenced in May, and will run through the summer. 3,000 people downloaded the VE Day event ('Time & Again'), and half term events all featured on our website at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/arts](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/arts) and included: Discover Arts Award Digitally with the University of Cambridge Museums; Scoop Magic - Live in Your Living Room; and The Quarantine Quilt.

2.2.4 We have seen an increase in demand for support to museums, especially those that are small and voluntarily-run. We have supported some emergency funding applications which have been successful, as well as for arts organisations including Babylon Arts and 20Twenty productions.

### **2.3 Cambridgeshire Skills**

2.3.1 We launched our first Cambridgeshire Skills [Online Brochure](#) at the end of May, and are currently marketing this to past and present students, our partners and through our social media channels.

2.3.2 City and Guilds have announced that qualification results will be issued on a calculated grade. This means than many of our cohort **will** receive an achievement during 2019/20.

2.3.3 The service has continued to develop and roll-out online courses, with good levels of take-up. We have also received in excess of 450 enrolments through the Open New Doors project, providing unique opportunities for shielded people to learn, participate and engage.

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

2.4.1 Referrals to our service have stabilised but outreach services were reporting increases at the end of May. To support this work, we have worked in partnership with the Office of the

Police and Crime Commissioner to develop processes for domestic abuse and sexual violence charities to bid into COVID-19 Extraordinary Ministry of Justice funding.

- 2.4.2 During the lockdown, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership has been working with many agencies and services to ensure that messages are communicated to the public that specialist domestic abuse services are still open for business and still able to support victims. This has included: work with the police to ensure posters are displayed in supermarkets, pharmacies and any other community spaces that are still open; social media campaigns; advertising services on Heart Radio; and links with GPs and other health settings. In particular, Hestia, a national domestic abuse charity, have linked with Boots Chemists to offer a 'safe spaces scheme' to enable victims to access a safe space in pharmacies to seek further specialist support. To support this campaign, information on local services and guidance on supporting victims of domestic abuse has been sent to all pharmacies across the county.
- 2.4.3 As lockdown starts to be eased, the DASV partnership is considering other places that will be opened up, where victims may visit and where there might be opportunities to highlight local specialist services. This will include hairdressers, as briefly referred to in May's Committee report, as somewhere that many people may be visiting when able to, as well as other community venues and spaces, along with further work with GP surgeries.

## **2.5 Cambridgeshire Registration Service**

- 2.5.1 As of 1<sup>st</sup> June, restrictions on birth registrations have been lifted. The service has acted quickly to implement the measures necessary for Registration offices across the county to re-open safely, and birth registrations began again from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June. There are a total in excess of 1,600 births in Cambridgeshire that need to be registered, and we are able to process around 50 per day whilst operating under tightly controlled conditions to ensure the safety of our staff and service users. Cambridgeshire was amongst the first 5 services nationally to re-launch.
- 2.5.2 Restrictions on marriage and civil partnership *notices* have also been lifted, however in order to clear the backlog of birth registrations these will not recommence as yet. We await further guidance on ceremonies.

## **2.6 Coroner Service**

- 2.6.1 It is anticipated that inquests which require a jury will be able to recommence from 1<sup>st</sup> July, subject to it being safe to do so with appropriate safeguards in place. Arrangements have been made to increase capacity for inquests to be heard, including reviewing the staffing levels within the service and securing additional courtroom capacity, via space at Peterborough and Huntingdon Town Halls. The use of two locations will allow more inquests to take place, helping reduce the backlog. The intention is for cases north and east of the county to be held in Peterborough and cases from the south to be held in Huntingdon, this delivering a better service for families, jurors and professionals involved in an inquest.
- 2.6.2 Inquests that do not require a jury will continue to be held virtually, with an Assistant Coroner in place to assist with the volume of inquests.

## 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 As at 12<sup>th</sup> June, there were 18,990 people on the registered shielded list across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, an increase of 2,726 since the last report to Committee. Around one third of this group report they have no support in place. The NHS has identified 32,357 people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who need to be shielded from the virus, and so both they and we continue to encourage people to register. The analysis of the 18,990 that have registered so far shows the following distribution by home address:

***List 1: Percentage by district as a proportion of the 18,990 shielded population:***

- Huntingdonshire – 22.8%
- South Cambridgeshire – 20.8%
- Peterborough – 17.9%
- Fenland – 15.2%
- Cambridge City – 12.2%
- East Cambridgeshire – 11.0%

***List 2: Percentage by district as a proportion of the total county population (866,210):***

- Huntingdonshire – 0.50%
- South Cambridgeshire – 0.46%
- Peterborough – 0.39%
- Fenland – 0.33%
- Cambridge City – 0.27%
- East Cambridgeshire – 0.24%

***List 3: Percentage by district as a proportion of the total district population:***

- Huntingdonshire – 2.42% of 178,970 residents
- South Cambridgeshire – 2.51% of 157,470 residents
- Peterborough – 1.67% of 203,600 residents
- Fenland – 2.85% of 101,260 residents
- Cambridge City – 1.69% of 136,850 residents
- East Cambridgeshire – 2.37% of 88,060 residents

- 2.7.3 At time of writing, the Hub has received 6,255 general telephone enquiries overall to our 0345 number, an increase of over 2,500 since the last report. In addition, the Hub has responded to 12,488 other direct requests for help and support, largely relating to food, medicines and other supplies. This is an increase of over 3,800 since the last report.
- 2.7.4 Anyone needing help is able to access that help in a number of ways, including via the 'I Need Help' digital forms on our web site. Of those submitted, 69% have asked for help with food or shopping, 24% with medication or prescriptions, 9% with emotional or wellbeing support, 7% with household maintenance and 3% with personal care. A further 15% required other forms of help (n.b. people can ask for help with multiple issues per form). The Hub team also makes proactive telephone contact with around 4,000 shielded people per week, to ensure they have the support they need.
- 2.7.5 The Hub has also continued to focus on people who need to register to be shielded but have not yet done so, AND who the national shielding team have been unable to make contact with or where that contact resulted in an incomplete outcome. We are now receiving regular data from the national team which enables us to try to make contact locally. Since the last report, we have attempted to make direct contact with 2,008 people in this category to make sure they are safe and well, that they have all necessary support in place, and are encouraged to register. Of this total, 1,226 were successfully contacted by telephone, with the remainder being contacted via home visits. Around 50 people contacted have required urgent support from the Hub, that otherwise may not have been able to access it. We have been supported throughout by Red Cross volunteers and some of our own redeployed staff.
- 2.7.6 Alongside this, we are aware that some people are being removed from the shielded register, because for example their circumstances have changed or they were incorrectly identified as needing to shield. We have been able to start identifying those that are being removed from the shielded list and are proactively contacting them to make sure they are aware, provide any urgent support, and link them in with their local district/city hub for ongoing support. There have been around 1,200 individuals removed from the shielding list since the shielding programme began.
- 2.7.7 During week ending 7<sup>th</sup> June, 3,689 shielded people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough received a food delivery via the national scheme, sufficient to last for one week. The Hub logistics operation, based from a warehouse facility in Alconbury Weald, continues to deliver urgent food and other essential items, as well as PPE across the health and care sector. Red Cross volunteers are continuing to work closely with the council and health partners in this operation. General food parcels (sufficient to last one week) have so far been delivered to 2,482 people, with an additional 792 people receiving more specialist food.
- 2.7.8 It is worth noting the crucial role our volunteer organisations play, without whom the Hub operations couldn't be delivered. Of note:
- The British Red Cross have:
    - Provided volunteers to the Hub on 63 days
    - Provided over 330 British Red Cross volunteers in the food distribution warehouse
    - Packed boxes for approximately 800 households, many of which receive multiple deliveries

- Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue have:  
Covered 17,180 miles on over 1,000 separate deliveries of food  
Spent 724 person hours driving
- The Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire 4x4 Response Group have, in support of the PPE Cell:  
Provided volunteers to the Hub on 56 days  
Covered 20,677 miles in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough delivering PPE via more than 1,500 separate drops (as at 5<sup>th</sup> June)
- Re:Act Disaster Response (formerly Team Rubicon UK) have, in support of the PPE Cell:  
Been providing seven-day cover since 16<sup>th</sup> April at the PPE warehouse  
Between 4<sup>th</sup> May and 17<sup>th</sup> May, picked and packed 348 PPE orders totalling just over 900,000 individual items

2.7.9 Alongside this, there are in excess of 2,500 volunteers registered with the Hub, and as we start to turn more of our attention to transitioning out of the response phase, we took the opportunity to contact them to ask them about their future volunteering potential. The key results were as follows:

- 66% (349) would like to volunteer for more than 3 months
- 70% (369) said that they were already volunteering with other groups
- 80% (424) said that they would like to help another organisation

The most popular organisation that volunteers want to work with are:

- 1. local Community Groups
- 2. local GP
- 3. Parish or Town Council
- 4. large charity

The most popular area of work that people wanted to volunteer in were:

- 1. Elderly in the community
- 2. Mental Health
- 3. Families and Children
- 4. Environmental

As part of our Think Communities approach, we are working with our District and City partners, and the Councils for Voluntary Service, to develop a volunteering model that provides opportunity for anybody to actively volunteer across our county.

2.7.10 The Hub's Community Response Service, which provides additional support to shielded people where there are no alternative arrangements in place, had responded to 102 requests for help by 7<sup>th</sup> June. The range of support provided is diverse, including gardening, shopping for specialist items, and household chores. This is important work as it ensures that someone who is at greatest risk from the virus is able to remain safely shielded at home.

- 2.7.11 The Hub has continued to focus on helping to prevent residents becoming the victims of coronavirus-related scams. The team are keeping a live and up to date knowledge of the latest scams reported to the county Hub, as well as the national picture and since April have sent information about specific scams to our network of 400 community groups, volunteers and partners, reached 4,000 people on social media, and updated our "Beware of Coronavirus Scams" web pages to help keep people safe in their communities:  
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/beware-of-coronavirus-scams>
- 2.7.12 In addition, New scams prevention resources have been added to our Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams Partnership resources webpage and shared with all our community contacts and on social media. These are:
- a dementia friendly version of the coronavirus scams postcard
  - an infographic produced by the National Cyber Security Centre about sextortion scams and how to protect yourself from these
  - and an excellent booklet produced by the National Centre, based on extensive research, showing how criminals use language in subtle and powerful ways to scam people out of money
- 2.7.13 We have worked with colleagues in Public Health to plan the delivery of leaflets to the shielded group and those being supported by the district/city hubs, signposting them to available resources to support them with their mental and emotional health. Over the coming weeks, an estimated 6,000 leaflets will be distributed across the County.
- 2.7.14 Supporting the Hub work, and linking in closely with our District and City Council partners, is a small team of Place-Based Coordinators. They have completed a diverse range of projects and interventions, including brokering support for two Gypsy Roma families to receive fuel vouchers from the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme to ensure they could use their stoves and had hot water, arranging premature baby clothes to be delivered to a single young mum in Fenland, the continuation of the delivery of 300 Art, Sport and Wellbeing boxes to vulnerable children and families in Fenland, providing community information, advice and support to Early Help District Managers to support three families with no educational supplies, online counselling and food provision, organisation of cleaning and gardening for a resident returning home from hospital after COVID-19, and support for a volunteer to mend a walking aid for a resident who would otherwise be immobile.
- 2.7.15 Plans have been developed to consider how the Countywide Hub and wider Hub network can respond to the possible requests for support from the Test and Trace work – for example, providing emergency supplies for people that may need to quarantine, and building on the existing network to ensure people that are having to quarantine receive the support they need. Due to the well-established Hub network we are in a good position to be able to respond to this new role. The Hubs will also support any local outbreak management plans, including ensuring that clear community messages are delivered to encourage people to maintain social distancing.
- 2.7.16 To lead the Test and Trace response work, a local Health Protection Board has been established comprising representation from specialists from Public Health England, local authority and health representatives and other relevant bodies. The Board is responsible for producing the Local Outbreak Control Plan by the end of June 2020. This plan seeks to achieve the following:

- Where someone is instructed to isolate and is also vulnerable there will be plans put in place to support that person through the existing community Hubs in Peterborough and Cambridge Cities and the Districts of East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Fenland
- Where the following up of contacts is more complex and cannot be achieved by the national call handlers, the contact arrangements will be handled by trained staff deployed in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Ensure that COVID-19 outbreaks in care homes, schools and in the community are prevented by clear measures identified in the plan, including supporting workplaces, communities and locations at higher risk to avoid COVID-19 outbreaks
- Where outbreaks do occur in care homes, schools and in the community those outbreaks are effectively managed and controlled calling upon already established infection control measures for the outbreaks of infectious diseases
- Ensure that there is sufficient local testing with results coming back in a timely manner so it is quick and easy for people to get tested for COVID-19 when they need to
- Ensure that all data from national, local and NHS sources are brought together to inform clear and decisive decision making to prevent, identify and control outbreaks
- Ensure that there are sufficient staff and volunteers trained and able to take on the responsibilities within the Local Outbreak Control Plan including the setting up of community rapid response teams to take immediate action to prevent and deal with local outbreaks

A local Member-led Board will handle engagement and communications with our communities to ensure they understand the actions being taken on NHS Test and Trace and allow those communities to feedback their issues to enable the Outbreak Management Control Plan to meet the needs of those communities.

2.7.17 The hub-led Community Resilience Group, a formal partnership group of around 30 different organisations reporting to the Tactical Coordination Group of the LRF, continues to meet each week, to focus on a wide range of community, voluntary and faith sector issues and opportunities. The group is responsible for ensuring vulnerable groups are identified and supported, and has also focussed discussions on services for people with sensory impairments and the support available for people experiencing mental health issues

2.7.18 As reported last month, alongside maintaining the direct support necessary for the shielded population, we are turning our attention to how we can maintain permanently, via Think Communities, some of the positive features of this new way of working – for example, support for self-organised social action, safe data sharing with our partners, rapid and creative decision making, and expansive collaboration across a broad partnership.

2.7.19 The work we are doing with our colleagues in Cambridgeshire ACRE and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils has continued, to discuss the role of town and parish councils in the current work, and, importantly, to explore how we can build on our already strong relationship with local councils as part of the recovery work and beyond. We have produced information which shows which parish councils fall within which Primary Care Network, the main geographical boundaries we will use to deliver the Think Communities approach. We have also received back the responses from a co-produced survey of parish and town councils; with a response rate above 50%, far higher than normally expected, it has provided us with some rich intelligence to inform the continued development of our relationship with parish councils and how we can best

support them, and vice versa, going forwards. A summary of the main headlines from that survey are attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.7.20 We have also held two internal workshops with colleagues involved with the development of Think Communities, to review and revisit progress made prior to the lockdown, and to look ahead to where we go next. The second workshop specifically focussed on commissioning using the Think Communities principles, and the role of libraries as part of that. By the end of June, we will have produced a detailed roadmap describing the key actions and milestones that we will deliver to rapidly escalate and mainstream the Think Communities approach.

2.7.21 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee was working on tackling some of the inequalities that exist across Cambridgeshire, both as part of other workstreams (for example, the new vision for Libraries, and supporting the Wisbech 2020 programme), and in a more focussed way through the Tackling Poverty working group. The report recently published by Public Health England, 'COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes', is of particular relevance to this ongoing work. The report identifies inequalities in the impact of the virus on certain groups, including amongst older people, men, people living in areas with higher levels of deprivation, and people in certain employment types.

2.7.22 However, the impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities is seen to be particularly disproportionate, and 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. The Chairman has therefore asked that the Tackling Poverty working group be asked to consider this as part of its work.

2.7.23 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/28ce564>

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/28e0375>

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/28f34a3>

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The second return to MHCLG accounting for spending and financial consequences resulting from the pandemic was submitted by the Council on 15 May. This second return required significantly more detail than the first request from central government, such as the inclusion of actual expenditure figures for April, a specific projection for May and then for the remainder of the financial year. We were also asked for information relating to cashflow and levels of reserves. The Council participated in work organised by the Society of County Treasurers and the County Councils Network to aid interpretation of the guidance to ensure greater consistency between individual Council returns.

3.2 The latest projected financial impacts for this committee are as follows:

April and May commitments (£000)	Committee name	Headline full-year estimates for this Committee as of 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 (£000)					
		New commitments	Income forgone	Impaired savings	Gross Total	Specified funding	Net Total
1,202	C&P	1,856	838	0	2,694	-291	2,403

3.3 The financial consequences within the remit of this Committee include:

- The Coroner Service will incur additional costs when it can begin to hold 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 will be a significant backlog of registrations and ceremonies to deal with in the Registration Service when the lockdown measures are lifted, 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.

Source Documents	Location
None	N/A

**Local Council Survey - Summary of Responses**

In relation to meetings:

- 82% of councils that responded are now meeting remotely, mainly using Zoom (we're all becoming experts in switching our mute buttons on and off!)
- Remote meetings are mostly working well (after a steep learning curve), although there are concerns about losing public participation in the democratic process
- Where remote meetings are not happening, this is largely due to meeting schedules not requiring it yet (e.g. where small parish meetings only meet once or twice a year), although there are a small number of local councils without the right equipment or who do not wish to meet virtually

In relation to concerns and impacts caused by COVID-19

- The main areas of concern amongst local councils are Annual Parish Meetings (including whether these can take place remotely), audit deadlines, and running facilities such as play areas, sports facilities and community buildings. In respect of this latter item, guidance is required about how these can be safely re-opened and operated (when the Government allows)
- 70% of local councils that responded have taken up no Government support. There is some sense that not all local councils are totally aware of what's available, as 13% asked for further information on this
- Over half of local councils have incurred some additional costs as a result of COVID-19. Money has been spent on setting up the technology for remote meetings, setting up staff to work from home, as well as giving emergency community grants and helping to print information leaflets. The average spend amongst those who have incurred costs is around £1,000 per local council
- Some local councils (33 out of the 132 responding) have suffered financial losses due to facilities being closed or services not being run. The average loss over three months equate to c£7.5k

In relation to the ways parish councils have supported their communities:

- Local councils have provided a wide range of support to communities, including by providing advice and support (64%), supporting volunteers (64%), and co-ordinating the delivery of food/shopping (44%) and medication (42%)
- The majority of local councils that responded (88%) indicated that some voluntary or mutual aid group is operating in their community. These groups are seen as being very effective, well-resourced in terms of their number of volunteers, and to be reaching those in most need

Finally, in relation to looking ahead:

- 61% of respondents believe there will be no long-term impact on their local council. However, a fifth of respondents believe their precept will need to increase and some 10% believe that facilities will need to be closed or service provision reduced in future
- It was felt that support from Cambridgeshire ACRE, CAPALC, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council needs to be provided online and be made available 'on demand', i.e. not necessarily scheduled as 'live' events
- The most-mentioned support needs are around running good remote meetings and guidance on reopening facilities such as play areas, sports facilities and community

buildings. Help is also required with future emergency planning (ensuring that if this happened again, that local councils and communities would be better prepared) and signposting to sources of support for issues like financial problems, fuel poverty and mental health problems

- The main challenges for communities as they recover are seen as:
  - rebuilding community confidence to participate in community activities
  - supporting individuals/families whose livelihoods and health (physical and/or mental) have been impacted by the pandemic
  - supporting local small businesses to recover
  - keeping the sense of community that has developed
  - returning the local council itself to normal operations, including face to face meetings
- In terms of how we maintain the volunteering ethos that has emerged, many respondents were keen to state that their community had never lost its community spirit, i.e. the efforts made during the pandemic are nothing new and are always present in the community. The key points made here were:
  - Some concerns over whether the levels of volunteering activity we have seen are sustainable once the crisis is over and people return to their jobs and normal lives
  - The need to 'harness' the volunteering efforts in some way so they continue, e.g. timebanking, good neighbour schemes and neighbourhood watch
  - The point was also made that if we impose bureaucracy and process on volunteer groups then they may give up
  - The need to recognise and reward/thank people for their volunteering efforts