

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

**To:** Communities and Partnership Committee

**Meeting Date:** 6 August 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:

- a) Note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus;
- b) Note and endorse the support provided to couples whose marriage or civil partnership ceremonies have been impacted by the pandemic; and
- c) Note and endorse the support being provided to marriage and civil partnership venues.

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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. 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. 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 continue to be 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.

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

- 2.2.1 Our plans to re-open libraries are progressing well, with the nine larger libraries having opened on 6 July. At time of writing, it is anticipated that all other libraries will re-open during week commencing 3 August, albeit with limited opening hours and reduced services. Each of the libraries to open in the coming days will offer two opening sessions per week initially, with the ability for customers to 'select and collect' a selection of materials, or to request specific titles.

- 2.2.2 The service has continued to work closely with Civic, our Future Libraries Initiative partners, to develop a broader online offer for those able to access the web. Library.live is the latest product, allowing residents to ask our libraries staff any question they wish, contributing to a growing bank of questions and answers. Further details, including a range of questions asked so far, can be found at [www.library.live](http://www.library.live)
- 2.2.3 Our Archives service is also some weeks into its phased re-opening, and the appointments-only system is working well. In addition, the service is compiling resources for use by teachers and is liaising with schools regarding a possible resumption of school visits from September.
- 2.2.4 Arts Council England funding opportunities have been announced in the last few days, designed to help arts and culture organisations recover from the effects of the pandemic. Our Library Presents service is reviewing these opportunities with a view to accessing these resources if eligible. Further details of the Culture Recovery Fund can be found at this link: [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

## **2.3 Cambridgeshire Skills**

- 2.3.1 The service has launched its new autumn prospectus, which can be found at this link: [www.cambsals.co.uk](http://www.cambsals.co.uk). A number of our traditional community-based learning venues remain unavailable to us at present, and so we plan to launch community-based learning from more and more libraries in the coming weeks and months. We have enjoyed the benefits of delivering adult skills training from in excess of fifty community venues pre-COVID, and it is important this wide range of locations and options is maintained for our learners and for all communities.
- 2.3.2 In light of the significant impact the pandemic has had on the service, we have agreed with the Combined Authority, our primary funder, that we can sub-contract more delivery to third party providers. We will cap this at 40% (the current cap is set at 20%), and this will ensure we reach our contractual targets and are offering the maximum amount of adult learning we possibly can. All of this work is supported by new contracts for the 2020/21 academic year which the service has secured from both the Combined Authority and the Education and Skills Funding Agency worth £2.3m.
- 2.3.3 The service's contribution to economic recovery is vital, and, following the transformation of the service that this Committee has overseen, we are extremely well placed to contribute to this essential work. We know that there will be many individuals economically adversely affected by the pandemic and who will be seeking new employment opportunities. Alongside targeted skills development, we are seeking to pilot sector-based work academies, similar to the existing Health and Social Care Sector Work Academy, which will help those seeking new employment opportunities. This work will support the newly announced HM Government 'Plan for Jobs 2020': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>

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

- 2.4.1 Our domestic abuse service continues to see higher than normal levels of referrals, and we are currently forecasting an increase on the previous year of 16%. Referrals to the Multi-

Agency Risk Assessment Conference (the partnership forum which reviews high risk cases or repeat cases of domestic abuse) also remain higher than normal, with two additional MARAC meetings being held in the last fortnight.

2.4.2 As reported last month, the service and a range of partners have secured additional funding to support this increase in demand, and the service is managing well. However, we will ensure that this is carefully and closely monitored.

## **2.5 Cambridgeshire Registration Service**

2.5.1 The Council has been keen to ensure that people with a wedding or civil partnership ceremony booked during lockdown are not adversely impacted by the circumstances we have faced. In order to support couples in this situation, those with ceremonies due to take place between 24 March and 31 August 2020 have been able to move their ceremony date once free of charge, the usual fee being £40. There have been approximately 600 couples who have benefited from having this fee waived, equating to £24,000.

2.5.2 Furthermore, if the new ceremony date is in the same price band but in the next financial year, the increase that would have been due has not been charged. If a ceremony has moved from a higher price band or location to a cheaper one, the additional balance has been refunded.

2.5.3 However, there is a further impact on some couples as a result of the lockdown, namely that some couples were required to give Notice again as their Notice period expired during the period that no ceremonies could take place. Couples in this situation have been required to pay the statutory fee of £35 per person to give Notice where their current Notice period is not sufficient to cover their ceremony date, equating to £24,500. Although this fee is statutory, the Council has decided to waive and/or refund this charge as a further gesture of support to couples whose big day has been impacted through no fault of their own.

2.5.4 Additionally, it is possible that some of our wedding and civil partnership venues will not survive the enforced closure, the ability to commence ceremonies as a result of the easing of restrictions coming too late. To support these venues the Council will provide an extra twelve months on Approved Premises approvals at no cost to the venue. Although a small gesture, it is hoped that this, alongside the Government financial support schemes, will help protect as many venues as possible from closure. The impact on the Council is £25k over a 5 year period.

2.5.5 During July, the Government gave the go-ahead to commence Citizenship ceremonies, both face-to-face and virtually. The service will be undertaking these six days per week over a three week period to make significant inroads into the waiting list that has accrued during the lockdown.

2.5.6 Good progress is being made on the backlog of new birth registrations that had built up during the lockdown, and we should have dealt with this backlog by mid-August. We currently have more bookable slots available for parents than are being taken up.

## **2.6 Coroner Service**

- 2.6.1 In last month's Committee report, we reported that we would be using Huntingdon Town Hall as an additional venue, alongside Peterborough Town Hall, for inquests with juries to deal with the backlog of cases that has built during lockdown. However, following a visit to assess conferencing facilities at Huntingdon Racecourse, a decision has been made to move inquests to this venue.
- 2.6.2 To help our service cope with ever-increasing demand, interviews for new Area Coroner capacity are taking place on 7 August. The intention is to appoint two Area Coroners, who will provide much needed support and capacity to our Senior Coroner. The Chief Coroner for England will be attending the interviews.

## **2.7 Trading Standards**

- 2.7.1 Regulated sports grounds and stands work has been increasing as the lockdown continues to ease. New Safety Certificates will be required for all venues as they re-open under COVID-19 secure arrangements. The Newmarket July Race Course has commenced its racing programme, and Huntingdon Race Course is awaiting its approved race calendar schedule.
- 2.7.2 Additionally, animal welfare and farm inspections are re-commencing.

## **2.8 Countywide COVID-19 Coordination and Response Hub**

- 2.8.1 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
- 2.8.2 Committee is aware that, from 1 August, the National Shielding Programme is paused, meaning that people who have had to be shielded from the virus because they are clinically extremely vulnerable will be able to enjoy many of the benefits that others are able to, including going out to work if it is safe for them to do so. The Hub has been working intensively with people who have been shielding to prepare them for this important change, providing advice and information, and ensuring that everyone that needs it has access to ongoing support beyond 1 August. This is especially important for those people that are still nervous about venturing outdoors, as both the national food delivery scheme and the prescription delivery service for shielded people also pause from 1 August.
- 2.8.3 Resources have been sent by email or letter to everyone that has registered as needing help on the shielded list, including:
- a general information and advice leaflet
  - a link to the video produced by the Hub showing the safety measures in place in a typical supermarket and pharmacy, as well as a storyboard for those that can't access

YouTube. The video can be found at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhsMzYGdXKY>

- information on support available from our trusted partners at Care Network and the Red Cross
- a letter from the Director of Public Health for shielded residents in Peterborough asking that they take extra precautions due to the current infection rates in the city

2.8.4 As at 31 July, there were 19,040 people on the registered shielded list across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, a net reduction of 18 since the last report to Committee. Around one fifth of this group report they have no support in place. The NHS had identified 32,305 people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who needed to be shielded from the virus up to 31 July, and we continued to encourage people to register up to that point. The analysis of the 19,040 that have registered so far shows the following distribution by home address:

**List 1: Percentage by district as a proportion of the 19,040 shielded population:**

- Huntingdonshire – 22.8%
- South Cambridgeshire – 20.9%
- Peterborough – 18.1%
- Fenland – 15.1%
- Cambridge City – 12.1%
- East Cambridgeshire – 10.9%

**List 2: Percentage by district as a proportion of the total county population (886,293):**

- Huntingdonshire – 0.49%
- South Cambridgeshire – 0.45%
- Peterborough – 0.39%
- Fenland – 0.33%
- Cambridge City – 0.26%
- East Cambridgeshire – 0.24%

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

- Huntingdonshire – 2.37% of 182,757 residents
- South Cambridgeshire – 2.46% of 162,197 residents
- Peterborough – 1.66% of 208,247 residents
- Fenland – 2.81% of 102,480 residents
- Cambridge City – 1.65% of 139,657 residents
- East Cambridgeshire – 2.29% of 90,953 residents

2.8.5 It is thought that shielding arrangements may become necessary again in the event of a significant increase in infection rates, either at a national level or linked to local circumstances. The Hub has been engaging with the national Shielding Directorate to discuss ways in which this might work, and the approach that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has taken positions us well to continue to support newly shielded people in the future should that become necessary.

2.8.6 As a result of these discussions, the Government Digital Service is developing new tools to manage future shielding data received by the Council, with an initial set of products expected to be available from September. The changes are based on the feedback shared

with Government relating to the data sharing processes so far, with a view to improving the quality of data received by councils and to make it easier to manage. Critically, we will have the ability to register, recall and edit the details and needs of a shielded person using the new tools, something that hasn't been available to us to date.

2.8.7 To support the possibility of future shielding arrangements, the Government is producing a local Lockdown Framework which will set out what the expectations are for councils in relation to supporting shielded residents. In response to the changes to the shielding programme, the Hub resource is being reviewed with a view to being able to scale-up quickly should there be a second wave and/or local lockdowns leading to shielding being reinstated. This will be managed as part of our mainstream Think Communities unified approach, referred to in the separate Service Director report to be presented at this Committee meeting.

2.8.8 Key performance data for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is as follows, as at 31 July (figures in brackets show the rates as at 30 June):

- Total number of residents who should be shielding: 32,305 (32,357)
- Of which, total number who are registered with the national shielding service: 19,040 (19,058)
- % of first-time calls made to newly registered people within 7 days: 90% (91%)
- Average number of days before first-time calls are made to newly registered people: 4.0 (4.1)
- Outgoing telephone contacts made to shielded people in the past 14 days: 1,891 (6,646 – n.b. during July the Hub engaged differently with Shielded people as part of transitioning them from Hub support towards independence in line with Shielding being paused)
- Outgoing targeted communications texts and emails sent in the past 14 days: 2,536 (1,731 – n.b. see note above)
- Total number of digital forms resolved requesting help to date: 3,132 (2,586), of which:
  - 2,133 (1,790) relate to food – 68% (69%)
  - 634 (570) relate to medicines – 20% (22%)
  - 284 (219) relate to emotional health and wellbeing – 9% (8%)
  - 206 (175) relate to household maintenance - 7% (7%)
  - 97 (76) relate to personal care - 3% (3%)
  - 551 (401) relate to other forms of help - 18% (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: 7,884 (6,662)
- Total number of general enquiry emails resolved to date: 1,846 (1,731)
- Total number of shielded enquiry emails resolved to date: 3,967 (3,078)
- Total number of national food deliveries in the last 14 days: 7,256 (7,389)
- Total number of people receiving a general 7-day Hub food parcel to date: 3,426 (2,706)
- Total number of people receiving a specialist 7-day hub food parcel to date: 1,194 (875)
- Total number of referrals made to the Red Cross Befriending Service: 806 (776)
- Total number of cases referred to the Community Response Service: 199 (195) (this service provides additional support including shopping, household chores, non-personal care etc.)

- 2.8.9 Alongside ensuring that formerly shielding residents continue to get the help and information they need, and being ready to stand up arrangements for any new shielding programmes, the Hub's focus is also on supporting our collective efforts to manage and control local outbreaks.
- 2.8.10 Many of the features of the Hub lend themselves to supporting the Test and Trace work, and ensuring that local communities receive targeted information to protect them from any increases in local outbreaks. For example, the Hub has worked with a number of case officers and call handlers who have provided bespoke support to shielded people, and who now have the skills needed to support contact tracing and targeted community work.
- 2.8.11 The Hub has been working closely with our District and City Council partners to ensure that every area has a rapid response facility available in the event of an increase in cases. This rapid response will be necessary to support local communications and preventative activity, to support any local testing and tracing work, and to help manage any local lockdowns. Rapid response teams will typically be led or coordinated by the local Environmental Health teams, and will comprise other officers and disciplines relevant to the work including community workers, community safety and police officers, housing staff, and voluntary sector leaders.
- 2.8.12 To support local rapid response arrangements, we have developed a comprehensive, flexible support package for anyone that needs it after being told they must self-isolate as a result of being tested positive, being contact traced, or being in an area subjected to a local lockdown (if relevant). The package we have developed and will coordinate has four key components:
- Provision of information and advice, including providing general support and befriending
  - Access to essential supplies including food and medicines
  - Provision of practical support, including for example dog walking, and support for family carers
  - Financial Support if absolutely necessary to enable someone to remain at home
- 2.8.13 Funding to support this work has been made available from the Government to every local area, and a working group is being established with District and City Council colleagues from community, housing and benefit teams to develop the process for how the fund will be used and to agree a consistent criteria across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Importantly, this will ensure that whichever area in our county is affected by local outbreaks, residents will benefit from the same consistent response.
- 2.8.14 Finally, the weekly 'Highlights from the Hubs' newsletter continues to be published, the latest editions of which can be found at the following links:
- **3 July:** <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/293e755>
  - **10 July** <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/294ff83>
  - **17 July** <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/29626f7>
  - **24 July** <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCAMBSCC/bulletins/29726f1>



### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The latest projected financial consequences of the pandemic within the remit of this Committee are as follows:

		<i>Full-year estimates for this Committee as of 3rd August (£000)</i>					
April – June commitments £000	Committee name	New commitments	Income forgone	Impaired savings	Gross Total	Specified funding	Net Total
1,841	Communities and Partnerships	2,066	863	0	2,929	-696	2,233

- The Coroner Service will incur additional costs as it continues to hold jury inquests once again, and we will need to invest in additional assistant coroner capacity to help remove the 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
- As mentioned earlier in this report the Registration Service will waive/refund the statutory notice fee for couples whose notices expired while they were unable to have their ceremony, have extended the license on approved premises for a 12 month period and waived the £40 fee for moving a ceremony date, all of which have a financial impact
- 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
- The above figures also include the financial impact of the redeployment of staff to the Countywide Hub
- Finally, the council has so far invested £175k 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>
None	