

## SERVICE HIGHLIGHT REPORT – COVID-19 AND KEY SERVICE UPDATES

<b>SERVICE AREAS:</b>	Customer and Digital Services Directorate: including Communications, IT & Digital, Emergency Planning and Health & Safety for Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. HR, Learning & Development and Customer Services for Cambridgeshire County Council.
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<b>REPORTING PERIOD:</b>	January 2021 - February 2021
<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

### Part 1 - COVID-19

#### NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

**Council Elections 2021** – On the 5 February 2021 the Government confirmed that elections would take place on 6 May 2021. As Returning Officer for the County Council the Director of Customer and Digital Services is working closely with the Cambridgeshire District and City Council election teams who deliver this poll on behalf of the County Council.

She is also working with our Chief Executive, Gillian Beasley, the Returning Officer for Peterborough City Council, the Chief Executive of East Cambridgeshire District Council, the Returning Officer for the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayoral elections, and with the Returning Officers for the Cambridgeshire District and City Councils so there is a co-ordinated approach to all the elections that are taking place in May. This will include ensuring that every aspect of the election process is COVID secure.

The Government have announced additional funding to support the delivery of elections during the pandemic, we await further detail on the allocation of this funding.

#### NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

**HR Advisory and Learning and Development** – the Cambridgeshire HR service have been supporting the planning and recruitment of staff for the Self-Isolation Support Service, the workplace Lateral Flow Testing, Contact Tracing and Community Lateral Flow Testing. They have put in place arrangements to recruit, induct and train contract and agency workers within a very tight timescale. In addition, work has been underway supporting the vaccination programme to develop a recording process so that we can accurately report on the number of staff who have been vaccinated.

Both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough teams have been working with managers so we are certain that risk assessments for all those who are clinically vulnerable have been reviewed to ensure they are still appropriate for those whose roles prevent them from being able to work at home. Additional messages have been shared to support those who are having to balance home schooling against their job roles which we recognise is one of the biggest challenges staff are facing. The Director of Education ran a session on this as part of the weekly Covid Conversations which commenced in January, and which have been really well received.

**IT and Digital** – this team have been working to ensure that the Self-Isolation Support Service has the right equipment and business systems to be able to operate effectively. As part of this enhancements to the Outbreak Management system are being implemented to streamline the capturing of information from citizen's regarding isolation.

The Lateral Flow Testing sites have all gone live during the first two weeks of February. IT devices and digital systems have been put in place to facilitate the operation of these sites. A booking system has been created to manage the footfall at each of the testing sites and mobile phones have been allocated to scan the test barcodes and report results.

**Customer Services Cambridgeshire** – the Self-Isolation support Service went live in mid-January contact is focused on priority areas. Since the launch the service has made calls to over 1800 residents. The majority advice being given to date relates to:

- Isolation support - advice on practical support to help someone isolate including finance, given on 40% of calls
- Health advice - advice on anything health related. i.e. symptoms they are experiencing, 20% of calls
- General advice, 53% of calls

Where more specialist or detailed help is needed the callers are 'handed off' to the appropriate teams either within our Councils' or with our partners.

## RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

**HR Advisory** – the focus on staff wellbeing continues with twice weekly wellbeing updates, guidance and tips issued in the staff bulletins as well as up to date advice and FAQs to staff as the COVID situation evolves and national guidance changes. Mental health awareness training continues to be rolled out, five sessions per month, and additional sessions have been developed specifically for managers aimed at helping them to support their teams during this time, whilst looking after their own wellbeing. Monthly wellbeing hours continue with very positive levels of engagement. Fortnightly briefing meetings carry on with our trades union colleagues. These provide an opportunity for answering questions and engaging trades union colleagues in all aspects of the Councils' response to the COVID crisis in relation to our staff.

## DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

N/A

## NEW COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

N/A

## WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

N/A

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Self-Isolation Support Service** - external communications about this new service focused on ensuring residents were aware that this is a Council service.

**Communications and Information** – The third national lockdown was announced by the Prime Minister on Monday, January 4th returning to the message 'stay home, save lives'. This message goes hand in hand with the announcement of increased number of vaccinations.

As a consequence the Communications team refined Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's communications strategy. This is rolled out across the whole public sector and is endorsed by the Local Resilience Forum's Strategic leadership group. It concentrates on:

- An even more rigorous approach to observing good public health measures because of the new strain of the virus – using easily understandable facts and figures;
- Giving practical, simple and understandable messages on why we should do this e.g. what sort of face covering reduces transmission, the best ways to ventilate a room;
- Cutting through complacency and 'message fatigue' by showing the real, local effect of people dealing with COVID-19 – with local and relatable case studies;
- Targeting messages for priority groups - communities such as gypsy travellers, rough sleepers, sex workers or those living in hostels or high risk workplaces - nuancing messages where there are particular issues or resistance and delivering them in the best ways and via the most appropriate routes;
- Promoting the good local support available to those isolating, either because they have the virus or are close contacts, and to support the wellbeing of other individuals and families who are vulnerable or isolated;

- Promoting both government grants and all of the additional discretionary support available to businesses and individuals unable to work during lockdown;
- Supporting enforcement action when this is taken – as a last resort where engagement and encouragement to follow rules has failed;
- Keeping people focussed by reminding them there is now an end in sight - supporting communications about local vaccinations.

Linked to this we have:

- Updated our social media tool kits on a weekly basis - using more impactful graphics and statistics for use by our partner agencies and Members;
- Produced weekly graphics and campaign updates for all Members and District Councillors including impactful graphics showing case numbers by District on a weekly basis;
- Launched our #Standfirm campaign – focussing on the real stories of local people whose lives have been affected by COVID. This points people back to key information to protect and support themselves and their families. Video, media and social media content is being backed by posters and all directed to a supportive campaign website page. The campaign had been viewed by 40,000 people in its first three days;
- Developed and launched a communication plan for the roll out of community wide rapid lateral flow testing across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from Feb 1– including leaflets, posters, Member and MP briefings, social media, web content, a radio campaign, advertorials in all local papers, media information and interviews and materials in key languages – this also includes links to support available to those needing to self- isolate;
- Produced specific materials linked to rapid testing for more vulnerable communities;
- Developed a set of media articles promoting support being given to businesses across Peterborough linked to the grant aid available to them – and improved our web content to make the grants easier to apply for;
- Continued to support the Clinical Commissioning Group by giving Members information about the siting of new vaccination centres in their areas within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough or on the borders;
- Continued to support volunteering activities at vaccination sites internally and externally;
- Developed a community script to promote the roll out of vaccinations and produced video content from champions from the Anglican, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim faith communities;
- Promoted the experiences of local Members and front line staff getting their vaccinations – to internal and external audiences – including videos and testimonials from the Cambridgeshire Chairman and Leader of Peterborough City Council;
- Promoted the vaccination programme to residential care workers;
- Continued to promote the Chairman’s commendations for local organisations and individuals who support COVID activities in Cambridgeshire.

In addition Communications have:

- Continued activity to support the recruitment of social workers and stepped up work to support the recruitment of home care and reablement workers;
- Continued to promote wellbeing initiatives to an internal audience, and launched weekly ‘covid conversations’ for staff in both councils to quiz senior managers on current issues;
- Supported progress on major infrastructure projects with communications activities – including Kings Dyke and active travel initiatives;
- Continued to field media queries about action on flooding and prepared proactive media materials about the council actions with partners;
- Promoted announcements about the award of The Towns Fund – including the development of a feature for East Anglian Business;
- Supported emergency communications related to snowfall – with resulting traffic disruption and school closures, in early January;
- Continued to work on accessibility issues across both Councils’ Websites to meet new national government standards.

Media and major reputational issues - COVID proactive media about the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown. COVID cases in schools, early year’s settings, care homes and workplaces and the considerable work related to schools opening to all primary pupils, and then closing again within a day at the beginning of

term. Snow and flooding issues, and continued trader's protests about the Mill Road consultation. National and local media attention connected to Cambridgeshire County Council's investment in the wholly owned company This Land and the confirmation of the timetable for external auditors appointed to conclude the audit into Manor Farm.

## Part 2 – BUSINESS AS USUAL ACTIVITY

### KEY SERVICE UPDATES – INTERNAL / EXTERNAL

**Emergency Planning** – continues to assist with the response to heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding in the new year, and is supporting the review process following these events. The Fletton COVID-19 emergency mortuary has been opened in support of partners in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum. The Cambridge facility is currently being prepared to enable it to be opened in February if it is required. These facilities will then remain open for as long as demand requires.

**HR Advisory** – work continues to drive the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda with a fortnightly action group meeting to maintain momentum on action. Longer term plans are currently being co-produced with the Equality and Diversity Action Group. Regular staff engagement surveys were launched in November, the first one was focussed on wellbeing and the most recent one has just closed, it focussed on equality, diversity and inclusion. The results of these brief pulse surveys enable HR and the leadership team to form action plans to address key staffing matters effectively, and to revisit particular subject matters on a regular basis to track progress.

In Cambridgeshire the new Head of Learning and Development officially joined the team on 1<sup>st</sup> January and has already been engaging with Directorate Management Teams to seek their views on future training needs to help design an appropriate strategy for the organisation. Those plans will capitalise on the move to a more digital and virtual learning experience (where appropriate) that has been accelerated by the pandemic, but has been well received as being more accessible and practical for most.

**Health & Safety** – continue to work with HR and Property colleagues to evaluate and clarify the processes staff and managers need to undertake if someone in a workplace experiences COVID symptoms or is tested positive. In addition, they have been engaged in supporting the regular response to changes in government advice in relation to safe working in offices including the tightening up of our advice around the use of face coverings in shared workspaces. The team continues to provide regular advice to managers on risk assessments and individual cases to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

**Customer Services (Cambridgeshire)** – calls presented in Jan 2021 were 11,191. The highest service volumes were seen across the Registrations (2047), Adult social care services (1739), Highways (1501) and General Enquiries (1026). Covid 19 calls reduced in January, consistent with patterns seen several weeks into a lockdown period. Flooding contacts impacted early in the month, resulting in changes being made to our telephone messaging on the highways line. Death appointments remain high.

With regard to other channels 9,418 non phone contacts were received in January, with the highest volumes received for Adult and Children's social care services and Blue Badges.

Funding has been agreed with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority in relation to the ongoing delivery of concessionary bus passes for Cambridgeshire by the Customer Services' team.

**IT & Digital Services** – Cambridgeshire IT worked with service leads to prepare for a full and final test of the Disaster Recovery systems on the 6/7<sup>th</sup> Feb. However, that weekend Cambridgeshire experienced a significant issue with a fire wall upgrade which impacted a high proportion of users. Work took place across the weekend and into the following week to ensure everyone could get back on line. The Disaster Recovery test will now need to be re-scheduled.

The first full move of equipment (for 3C Shared Services) from Shire Hall to Sand Martin House was completed however, as planned. The rollout and training of O365 continues across all both Councils.

**FINANCIAL ISSUES**

N/A

**PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES**

N/A

**UPCOMING ISSUES & HORIZON SCANNING AREAS**

N/A

**POSITIVE NEWS STORIES****Communications and Information** - see Communications section above.