

Cambridgeshire County Council's response to Covid-19

To: General Purposes Committee

Meeting Date: 24 November 2020

From: Chief Executive and Joint Management Team

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable

Key decision: No

Outcome: The Council's response to COVID-19 and our strategies for county-wide recovery will have a significant impact on outcomes for individuals and communities.

This report provides an update on the Council's ongoing response to the current Coronavirus pandemic.

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

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1. Background

- 1.1. The Council remains committed to doing everything it can to reduce of the impact of COVID-19 infections and to supporting Cambridgeshire to recover from the coronavirus emergency. This report provides an update on the Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and provides links to more detailed operational information wherever available.
- 1.2. [Coronavirus Data](#), extracted on 17 November 2020, indicates that in Cambridgeshire there have been a total of 6166 COVID-19 cases detected since the beginning of the pandemic, with a lower cumulative rate than England (943.8 cases per 100,000 compared to 2122 cases per 100,000 for England). Similar to national patterns, cases of COVID-19 have increased since late September and the current weekly case rate is 138.9 cases per 100,000 for Cambridgeshire, compared to 271.2 cases per 100,000 for England for the week up to 12 November. Case rates are highest in Cambridge, where the weekly case rate is 247.6 per 100,000. There have been 421 deaths involving Covid-19 in Cambridgeshire up to 30th October 2020, [ONS data](#).
- 1.3. The Council's Health Committee has the delegated authority to exercise the County Council's functions in respect of public health and monitors the public health COVID-19 intelligence and response in detail. More detailed public health information can be found in Health Committee reports at this link: [Health Committee meeting papers](#).
- 1.4. It is likely that Government restrictions will continue to tighten and ease over the coming months and the Joint Management Team will continue to monitor guidance to ensure that our services remain open wherever possible, so that we can continue to support our residents, communities and businesses.

2. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Outbreak Control Plan

- 2.1. The Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP) was first published on the Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) website in June. Since then it has been updated twice to take account of the changing national picture and new Government legislation.
- 2.2. In August it was updated to reflect new and changed responsibilities as outlined in the Government's *Contain* Framework which clarify which powers sit with Government and which sit with upper tier authorities for action and response. A new document was produced which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the whole public sector system to deliver the plan, and its links through to national, regional and local action.
- 2.3. The [LOCP](#) and [Roles and Responsibilities](#) document was further updated on 6 November to explain how Government had standardised the application of local restrictions by introducing a three tiered system of Local COVID Alert Levels in England, plus arrangements for the current four week national lockdown.
- 2.4. 80% of all actions in the LOC Action Plan have already been completed and, to reflect recent Department of Public Health guidance and our local Public Health strategy for coming out of Lockdown, we are in the process of making further updates. Since mid-November, enhanced contact tracing has been rolled out across Cambridgeshire alongside

our new county-wide case management system.

- 2.5 While the primary responsibility for delivering the LOCP rests with Cambridgeshire County Council as the upper tier local authority, each City and District Council in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has responsibility for delivering a local action plan based on specific local needs, and these are all now available to view on each Council's website.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Prior to the pandemic there were already a range of 'unknowns' as part of the financial planning. These included, for example, the 2020 Spending Review, The Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Retention, Adults Social Care Green Paper, reforms of schools funding and longer term Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) funding. The pandemic has delayed these national reviews and, as we progress through this year's business planning process, these uncertainties remain.
- 3.2 In addition, response to the pandemic has generated additional pressures particularly with response costs, increased demand for services, reduced income and some impaired savings initiatives. Details on financial implications are included in this committee's [Integrated Finance Monitoring Report](#).
- 3.3 Through a combination of a huge local effort, government funding and tight financial control, CCC has been able to mount a successful response to the pandemic, limit the number of cases, and maintain care and support for vulnerable people. It is recognised that this is not sustainable without a longer-term funding settlement and, as part of our overall strategy, the Council will continue to work closely with government to address the local government funding issues.

4. Recovery

- 4.1 On the 14th of May, this Committee endorsed CCC's approach to recovery [Recovery Framework \(section four\)](#). As noted in this paper, this is not recovery from an emergency as we have previously known it, the COVID-19 pandemic remains the biggest, longest, deepest peacetime emergency we have faced. The measures that we have put in place to manage response and the impact of the pandemic will be with us for some time so there will be no straightforward handover from response to recovery.
- 4.2 Despite this and the huge effort and capacity needed for emergency response, the Council has made good progress towards system, organisation and service recovery. It is important that we don't lose sight of what we have achieved and what we want to achieve going forward so capturing and using learning from the last six months has been vital. An exercise has been completed to understand the lessons we have learnt as a council throughout this period – what has been done well, what we could have improved upon, and this has fed the recovery plans moving forward.
- 4.3 Much of our recovery work is focused on managing impact and demand across our people services, which we know will be exacerbated by this second, and any further lockdowns. The Think Community and Adult Resilience recovery plans work to address and support

citizens with the impact of economic hardship, escalating and more complex demand for services, and referrals to safeguarding and mental health services.

- 4.4 The county hub is managing outbreaks and utilising redeployed staff to carry out essential work to support the most vulnerable in our communities. The unified approach, developed as part of the Think Communities/ Cambridgeshire Local recovery plan, is being mobilised to coordinate support for residents which is placed based, people centred and solution focused.
- 4.5 The Adult Resilience 'Prevent, Reduce, Delay' recovery plan is maximising community assets and resources to prevent the need to access health and social care services, reduce escalating care needs and hospital admissions and ensuring quality care that maximises independence and control of infection.
- 4.6 We continue to support staff to work from home where possible. Work is also continuing to ensure that staff can safely operate from council buildings where it is essential to the effective delivery of services. Ensuring these buildings are, and remain, safe and COVID secure for staff and citizens with effective Test and Trace systems and processes in place.
- 4.7 The way staff have been working provides the opportunity to increase the pace and engagement on our Future Working Ambition recovery programme. This work brings together the Workforce, IT, Asset and People Strategies to drive our working ambition now and into the future. We want to find the right balance between using our buildings for activities where we need to come together with colleagues, partners and citizens with the productivity of working from home. This will enable us to: get best value for money from our assets; support our staff to work in a way that meets citizen expectations; and supports the work life balance of staff, making CCC an employer of choice.
- 4.8 During the first lockdown carbon emissions reduced, air quality improved, nature thrived and consumption of fossil fuels reduced. This was largely due to significant homeworking reducing the numbers of cars on the road. More people took up walking and cycling, the shift from vehicles to cycles was supported with the pop up cycle lanes introduced to provide safe active travel for both leisure and commuting. This second lockdown period will continue to reinforce the behaviour change which is part of the climate change recovery plan.
- 4.9 Further work will be done to understand the impact of this second lockdown period, this will be reviewed alongside the initial Impact Assessment for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to understand the if and how the impact have changed, and where CCC need to change our recovery plans to any these changing needs.
- 4.10 As part of recovery, Chairs, Vice Chairs and Directors have been reassessing and resetting plans against the corporate strategic framework to ensure that the core vision, priorities and principles remain valid as we look to address the impacts of COVID-19 and take advantage of new opportunities. The refreshed strategic framework will be presented to the next GPC committee. Linked to our corporate priorities, CCC also has a well-established approach to quarterly performance reporting, which has continued throughout the pandemic, flexing to enable the organisation to understand progress against our response and recovery plans, as well as our Corporate Strategy.

5. Workforce

- 5.1 Since the start of the pandemic our workforce have reported that:
- 191 have had COVID tests carried out.
 - 280 have had an Anti-body test carried out.
 - 40 have been diagnosed with the virus.
- 5.2 Throughout this period regular briefing meetings have been in operation with the three recognised trade unions across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. These meetings are now fortnightly rather than weekly as they were in the initial stages where most of the decision making around policy and approach was being formulated. The meetings provide an opportunity for answering questions and engaging trade union colleagues on all aspects of the Council's response to the COVID crisis that have a people related connection. This includes key matters such as the risk assessment process for buildings and individuals and also the guidance for staff on returning to work.
- 5.3 We continue to focus heavily on health and wellbeing to support people as best we can during this period. In the last few months we have introduced a process of individual risk assessment on wellbeing grounds for those who have been working from home and struggling with either their physical or mental health, so that they can access the workplace for some of their working time, to help.
- 5.4 A monthly Wellbeing Hour has been introduced for all staff, the first one in September was a broad introduction to the wide range of support already in place and offered by HR, Health and Safety and Occupational Health. The second was focused on back care and there are further sessions booked in November to be run by MIND and December focused on alcohol awareness.
- 5.5 New monthly pulse surveys are being launched this month, the first one will focus on wellbeing to get a sense of how people are feeling now that we are six months on, and what more we can do to support people. Next month the focus will be on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 5.6 In response to the staff survey in May, an on line work station risk assessment process was put in place to enable anyone working at home for two or more days per week to access equipment to set them up to work safely at home. So far 1601 CCC staff have completed the online assessment.
- 5.7 Online mental health awareness training continues to be rolled out, five sessions per month, and this has been very well received by those who have attended. Additional dates have been put on during November and December in response to the further challenges presented by the second lock down. In addition to this some sessions are currently being scheduled for managers to enable them to support their team members who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health as a result of this pandemic.
- 5.8 The Health & Safety and Property teams continue to work together to carry out Risk Assessments of the current building portfolio with particular priority being occupied premises. In addition to this an individual risk assessment process has been established to support members of staff who fall into one of the vulnerable or higher risk categories including BAME groups, working with occupational health to support this process, and this

was recently extended to cover those above 60 who are now included in the new government guidance as more vulnerable.

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

6. Significant Implications

- 6.1 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.

7. Links to other reports containing Covid updates

- 7.1 [Adults Committee](#) 313, 316, 318.
- 7.2 [Children and Young People Committee](#) 358 – 361.
- 7.3 [Commercial and Investment Committee](#) 379.
- 7.4 [Communities and Partnership Committee](#) 309, 311, 313, 315.
- 7.5 [Environment and Sustainability Committee](#) 41.
- 7.6 [Health Committee](#) 339 - 340, 342 - 344, 346.
- 7.7 [Highways and Transport Committee](#) 48.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes
Name of Financial Officer: Tom Kelly

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Source documents

5.1 Service highlight reports for all Directorates sent to Members monthly from November.

[Highlight Reports](#)