

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	15 May 2020
Title:	An Early Review of The County Council's Response to the Covid 19 Crisis
Report From:	Chief Executive

Contact name: John Coughlan, Chief Executive

Tel: 01962 845252

Email: John.coughlan@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to brief Cabinet on the County Council's responses so far to the Covid 19 pandemic and crisis, and to seek endorsement of next steps, especially with regard to plans for recovery.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Cabinet should:

2. Note the contents of this report as a summary of the exceptional events and responses by the County Council to the Covid 19 crisis, bearing in mind that this can only be a top-level assessment of a massive and fast changing situation;
3. Approve the immediate emphasis on the County Council's recovery work, on behalf of the County Council and the local Hampshire economy, notwithstanding the long-lasting nature of the crisis;
4. Acknowledge the continuing extraordinary and at times heroic efforts of the staff of the County Council as the crisis has progressed.

Executive Summary

5. This report summarises the range of exceptional steps that have been taken corporately and departmentally by the County Council to respond to the current national emergency stemming from the Covid 19 pandemic. The report summarises progress so far particularly with regard to the local authority's crucial public health and social care duties. The report focusses on the core responsibilities of Hampshire County Council itself, but heavily reflects our formal partnership with the sub-regional and interagency arrangements under the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The report also summarises and seeks endorsement for the beginning of the local authority's recovery processes.
6. An unprecedented national crisis has demanded an unprecedented set of responses from across the public sector, most notably the NHS, but also local government. The County Council's response has particularly included:
 - a rapid but managed re-designation, and reprioritisation of services;
 - close work with the schools' community in its general closure but targeted retention of services for vulnerable and key workers' children;
 - a mass movement to remote working by council staff (enabled by what has proven to be a visionary approach to IT improvements in the past year);
 - an extraordinary mobilisation of staff and services in Adults' Health and Care that has enabled the HIOW NHS acute sector to create significant new capacity to cope with victims of the disease while at the same time changing the operating model for care homes to manage their and their residents' vulnerability to the disease;
 - leadership of the new duties for support to the "shielded" individuals identified as vulnerable and in need of social isolation by the NHS;
 - the managed reduction and re-prioritisation of a range of "place" services from the oversight of construction projects and waste disposal services, through to the management of country parks and open spaces;
 - the County Council's leadership, on behalf of the LRF and through our oversight of the Coroner Service, of the "excess deaths" strategy including the emergency provision of additional mortuary capacity.
7. As a statutory body and democratic institution a core principle of the County Council's approach to the crisis so far is to adhere closely to Government

guidance and medical advice, and especially to the maxim that we should all: stay safe; protect the NHS; and save lives. This approach has served the organisation and the County well so far, though inevitably there have been and will continue to be testing moments and issues, given the scale, dynamism and complexity of the crisis and the unprecedented circumstances creating tensions on all parts of government and the public sector. In this context it has proved invaluable that the County Council is the public health authority for the county and the leadership and performance of local public health services has been exceptional throughout. Alongside these critical public health and safety duties, the County Council is also mindful of its responsibilities with regard to the profound economic implications of the crisis, on behalf of HCC the institution and especially upon the welfare of the Hampshire Community.

8. This report will begin to address the “recovery phase” which is the key component of any crisis management. One of the distinguishing features of this crisis will be its length in time. Therefore, the overlap between crisis response and crisis recovery will be equally critical. The County Council and the county’s residents cannot afford (quite literally) for recovery to await the conclusion of the response.
9. Finally, by way of summary, the financial implications of the crisis on the County Council’s own budgets and financial planning will be profound. A separate paper to this Cabinet will address those implications in more detail.

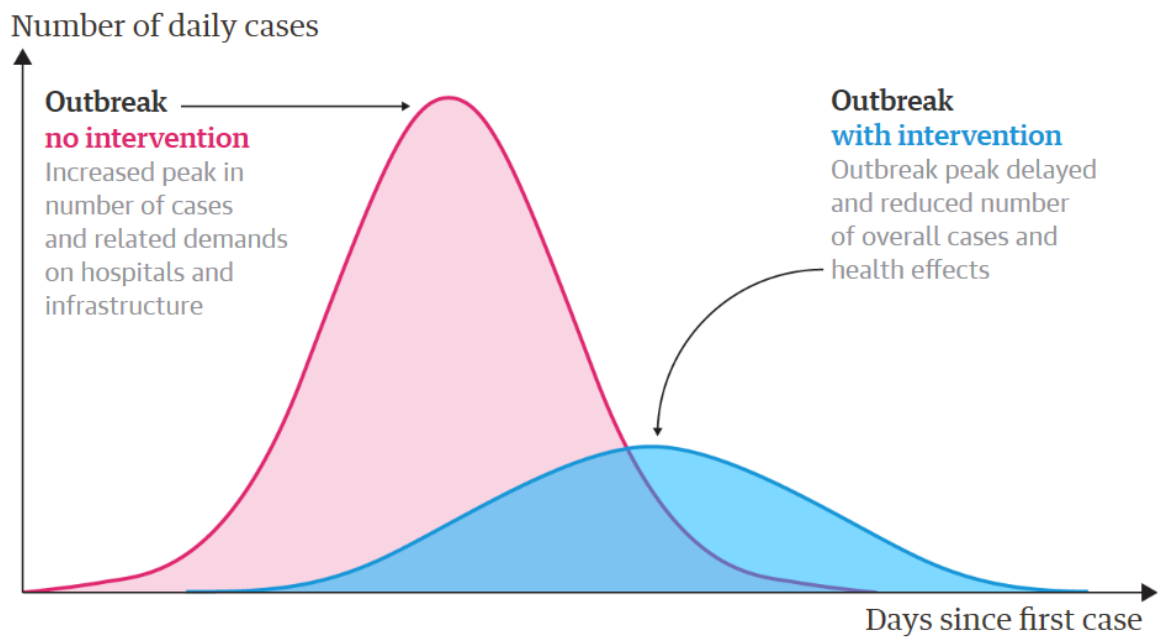
Contextual Information

10. The following sections of this report will offer a summary of the responses so far by department and where necessary by service. Corporately, and in line with the activities of the inter-agency, pan-Hampshire Local Resilience Forum, the County Council introduced its emergency planning structure on 18 March 2020. This includes a strategic Gold Command, chaired by the Chief Executive and made up of the Corporate Management Team and relevant key officers, an operational corporate Silver Command and departmental Bronze Commands offering tactical service leadership.

Public Health - Context

11. The current Covid-19 outbreak is due to a new coronavirus from animals, which first came to light in China in December 2019. The first cases in the UK were identified in January 2020. With more and more countries around the world experiencing outbreaks, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic in March 2020.

12. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which, in humans usually cause mild illness, including common colds. The COVID-19 disease is spread through cough droplets either directly from an infected person or from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus through someone coughing onto them. The virus is estimated to last for up to 72 hours on hard surfaces.
13. The symptoms of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are typically (but not exclusively) a cough, a high temperature and shortness of breath. It can affect anyone and for most people the symptoms will be mild, and people will recover in around two weeks. However, the individuals at highest risk for severe disease are those over 70 years and those with underlying health conditions where symptoms could require hospitalisation. It is difficult to accurately estimate the mortality rate because not all cases are identified. However, data from around the world suggests it is likely to be around 1%. The disease in children appears to be mild in most cases, though there have been instances of deaths.
14. Within Hampshire there has been a steady rise in cases and deaths in line with the national spread and epidemic. As of 2 May 2020, there are 2,827 diagnosed cases in Hampshire.
15. Due to the lack of immunity in the population the disease can easily spread between people causing a large outbreak and 'peak' in cases. If allowed to spread without intervention the resulting level of disease would overwhelm our health and social care services due to the extreme volume of those requiring specialist care and support. Therefore, a number of measures, many of which were based on existing national plans to respond to influenza pandemics, were put in place by the government to manage the outbreak. The first phase was to **CONTAIN** the disease, tracking those who had the disease and contact tracing those they had been in close contact with. Working with Public Health England, the County Council's public health team supported this through connecting with and supported key settings affected.
16. Following this phase and once the disease was understood to be spreading in the community, the country as a whole moved to the **DELAY** phase. This phase has increasingly involved measures to slow the spread through social distancing for the whole population and shielding for the most vulnerable. These measures have been largely successful, and we appear to have now seen a predicted peak much reduced and delayed, albeit with many people experiencing severe disease and significant numbers of COVID-19 related deaths. As referenced above, while recognising the success of these significant measures in terms of lives protected and saved, the County Council has also to be concerned about the economic impact of this crisis upon the welfare of the Hampshire population.
17. The following graph depicts the difference in peaks by way of timing as well as severity, related to the delay approach.



Guardian graphic. Source: Centers for Disease Control

18. As the pandemic develops and the impact of the interventions is better understood we will, at some point see an easing of the measures such as social distancing. However, in the absence of an effective vaccine, as long as there are cases of infection in the community, the likelihood of a resurgence of spread remains. If and when restrictions are eased, the UK may then see a rise in the disease again leading to a second wave. This will need to be managed in a similar way to the current measures.
19. The programme of testing for the COVID 19 is key for understanding the spread of disease and prevent further cases. The testing programme has been developed over the life of the epidemic. In the 'contain' phase testing was for people who had travelled to affected areas or those in contact with cases who were symptomatic. The next phase testing was for those admitted to hospital who were symptomatic and for potential outbreaks in care homes. A programme of testing for key workers has commenced in Hampshire recently to support business continuity.
20. We are now moving to a phase of testing and tracing community cases. This involves increased testing in the community, tracing those who have been in contact with a case and supporting people to self-isolate with symptoms and NHS care where needed. The contact tracing will be via a phone app developed by the NHS and Public Health England staff supported by local government staff. The Director of Public Health is leading the early implementation of the programme through his leadership role on the Isle of Wight

21. A vaccine is being researched which would enable society to gain population immunity, preventing the spread of disease and protecting the vulnerable from illness. This is most likely to be available in early 2021.

Public Health - Leadership

22. Through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), Hampshire County Council has provided public health leadership to the multiagency response to ensure that the emergency is managed in a way that is proportionate and ensures that the local system, especially in health and care, is able to cope with the pandemic. The Director of Public Health (DPH) is the Deputy Chair of the Strategic Command Group of the LRF, working to the Chief Fire Officer. (The LRF is the umbrella term for the formal legal partnership of key statutory agencies in a given area, in our case that is Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, including the two cities and the island. The LRF is not a legal entity in itself and holds no direct budgets or accountabilities but is the sum of its constituent statutory partners in the area who must work together during a time of crisis.)
23. The public health team, working with Southampton and Portsmouth Directors of Public Health, has ensured that the data on the disease is understood by the partners for effective response. Key workstreams led directly by the County Council's DPH include preventing the spread of infection through effective social distancing, setting up testing with national government and ensuing national guidance on PPE is communicated and interpreted for effective use by local agencies. Members of the public health team have also supported the workstream to protect the most vulnerable led by the HCC's Director of Adult Social Care on behalf of the LRF. Throughout all stages of the pandemic, support and advice has been given to all parts of the council dealing with different aspects of the public health emergency.

Adults' Health and Care

24. The department has moved positively to maintain its critical functions throughout the on-set of the Covid19 crisis. Staff have resolutely and positively moved to the new working from home and social distancing arrangements; providers are making support in the community available through our Brokerage services and all providers are being supported and paid in advance to maintain their cash-flow and resilience. We are regularly liaising with the whole sector to ensure that direct care is continuing to be provided in line with the published guidance.
25. Our direct care provision, alongside NHS partners, has seen a significant amount of acute hospital provision freed-up in anticipation of COVID19 cases. Some 40 – 50% of the available acute hospital beds are currently available.

This has been achieved through closer collaboration and good joint working with partners in terms of successfully implementing new, quicker hospital discharge arrangements. Community teams have also worked tirelessly to ensure that residents' help and support needs can be met wherever possible without the need to go to hospital and this has been superbly backed up and supported by public and private nursing and home care providers. Use of out of hospital capacity, including the standing up of additional provision funded by the NHS is being optimised. The positive Acute capacity position is also a consequence of less people electing to go to hospital for other reasons, though that in itself may present a future risk around the implications for untreated serious conditions.

26. Our in-house care homes, in the main, have maintained good levels of staffing and care for residents. These achievements in themselves cannot be underestimated. There has been a more recent national recognition that the care sector lacked the levels of focus and support as initial crisis management nationally focussed heavily on acute pressures. There has been a legitimate concern, for later consideration, as to whether national policy contributed to the importation of the virus to some care settings. HCC's direct provision has undoubtedly sustained the first challenges of the crisis due to the quality and commitment of front-line staff and managers and the high premium the organisation has placed on its direct provision historically. The County Council's direct provision has been well led and supported over time which set it in good stead for the substantial challenges of the crisis. Like a proportion of care homes locally and nationally we have seen Covid19 increasing as an issue with time. Staff have performed valiantly in the face of growing service pressures, concerns over the availability of PPE and access to appropriate and timely testing. It is difficult to adequately describe, in such an overview report, the quiet dedication and determination of staff and carers to ensure continuity and quality of care for all service users.
27. As referenced above, the leadership of H1OW's "Shielding" arrangements has been taken on by HCC's Director of Adults' Health and Care and the Departmental Management Team. Shielding is the term used to support those members of the community who are identified by the NHS as in need of social isolation by virtue of their underlying health conditions. The process involves GPs and hospital Consultants notifying NHS England about individual patients and then the NHS contacting those individuals and asking them to register for support if needed. Those who register for support are then notified onwards to the local hub arrangements, which are run by HCC for Hampshire County. Food deliveries are arranged centrally but the hub, partly through a helpline (HantsHelp4Vulnerable; 0333 3704000) ensures other forms of support, such as collecting prescriptions, are made available. This takes place through a range of community local response centres coordinated in partnership with district councils and the local voluntary sector.

28. These arrangements have been brought into place with exceptional rapidity and are now making a substantial difference to the needs of individuals. There have been inevitable teething issues. These have included: concerns about the quality of an initial “food drop” to the county; concerns about the quality of the individual “food boxes” distributed centrally; and substantial risks of confusion with various partners. Perhaps the most challenging issue has been the pressure from partners that HCC should routinely share all of the data on shielded individuals – for worthy but ill-defined purposes. HCC is currently holding its position that the good intentions of a range of partners do not justify a relaxation of essential data protection duties. However, dialogue with partners is continuing to ensure that the quality of support can be sustained and improved regardless. **A link to the data dashboard can be found at;**
- <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/AHC/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FAHC%2FShared%20Documents%2FCOVID%2D19%2DHantshelp4vulnerable%20Helpline%2FWelfare%20Support%20Team%20External%20Scorecard%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FAHC%2FShared%20Documents%2FCOVID%2D19%2DHantshelp4vulnerable%20Helpline>

Children’s Services

29. With regards to the County Council’s critical children’s social care services, a three-phased approach has been developed, with each phase based on prioritising key areas (eg residential care) in the event of having fewer staff available to work should the situation worsen.
30. The services are currently operating in phase one meaning essentially doing ‘business as usual but doing it differently’. All statutory timescales for safeguarding visits and meetings remain the same (and are being met) but with enhanced use of technology to ensure officers see children and families through digital means – WhatsApp, Teams and a number of other similar approaches as appropriate and required. Working digitally has been part of the Children’s Services transformation programme and staff were already familiar with mobile and flexible working. The service is fully operational and continues to operate as near to normal as possible. A small number of face to face home visits are being undertaken, where there is confidence that staff can safely socially distance themselves while fulfilling their duties. This is usually in relation to urgent child protection work.
31. At this stage, the numbers of staff ill or self-isolating for various reasons has remained stable at between 10-15% and there is confidence that safeguarding services will remain as reported above. The approach is being closely communicated with partners, including through the MASH so they are aware that of this business as usual approach in the interests of protecting vulnerable children during the crisis. That vulnerability has not diminished and requires the local authority’s constant vigilance and intervention. Furthermore,

there is a legitimate concern that the true impact of the crisis on children's social care services is yet to come. As described in the report on domestic abuse before this Cabinet, we can expect a later "bow wave" of delayed referrals about vulnerable children brought about by the combined effects of the lockdown and the reduction of routine universal service accessibility or attention.

32. Since the closure of schools was announced, practically all schools have reopened to provide emergency childcare to children of critical workers and those that are vulnerable. Prior to Easter around 3,700 school age children have been attending regularly which is around 2% of the total school population. Schools remained open over the Easter period and the services maintained good coverage to provide childcare, including on Good Friday and Easter Monday, although the number of parents taking up that offer for their children fell to around 800. Since Easter, those numbers have risen to almost 5,700 children attending school, 3% of the school population. Although lower than anticipated, the take-up in Hampshire of this school provision is higher than national averages. The Department for Education (DfE), including at ministerial level, have expressed concerns about the continuing need for effective support and surveillance of vulnerable children at this time.
33. The School Improvement Team, supported by Education Personnel Services, has been particularly busy providing ongoing advice and guidance to headteachers to ensure schools could remain open safely and offer a high-quality experience to children. A system has been put in place to ensure that all schools report weekly on the support they are giving every individual child who has a social worker such as those on a child protection plan or those in care. Over 930 children open to children's social care are attending school regularly which is around 20% of the cohort. Where such children are not in school, then schools are keeping in regular contact with them to ensure pastoral needs are being met. This system is being monitoring through weekly conversations between each headteacher and a member of the School Improvement Team. Colleagues from both social care and education are jointly working to increase the numbers of children attending school from this specific cohort.
34. There has been a rapid and significant decline in the number of routes transporting children from home to school, however the provider market has responded well, and arrangements are in place for all children who need it. In some circumstances additional vehicles have had to be commissioned to support social distancing during journeys. Financial support has been made available to the home to the school transport market through continued payment of part or all of contract costs.
35. Early Years childcare providers have adapted to provide care for vulnerable and critical worker children, extending opening hours where necessary. Whilst government have confirmed that Early Years Education

funding will continue to be paid to providers regardless of whether settings are open or closed, this source of funding represents less than an average of 50% of income for the majority of providers. Remaining income ordinarily comes from private parental fees and providers are under significant pressure, from parents whose children are not attending during the crisis, to reduce these fees. This is creating tension and significant financial pressure in the sector, further complicated by the broad range of providers delivering childcare which makes it complex for many to understand, and in some cases access, government financial support packages. The County Council has reported these concerns directly to DfE.

Economy Transport and Environment (ETE)

36. Most staff in ETE are able to work remotely, with many utilising the County Council's new technology platform to work from home. However much direct service delivery work is carried out through service contracts such as those with Skanska for Highways maintenance and Veolia for waste management, including Household Waste and recycling Centre (HWRC) operations. These service areas have been significantly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. There were episodes of public hostility to site workers prior to and in the early stages of the lockdown, especially in residential areas. In the light of some of these pressures and in response to the non-essential travel ban, HWRCs were closed and priority given to supporting maintenance of District Council household waste and recycling collections to prevent the build-up of waste. While all of the local evidence is that these tactics have worked, it is clear that there is continued national debate (and national political focus) on the legitimacy of re-opening the centres early and therefore defining travel to them as "essential". There has been a range of contrasting opinions, some of which have been reflected in confused guidance. At the time of writing it is anticipated that steps will be taken soon to cause an early reopening nationally and HCC's preparations are in hand accordingly. Achieving any re-opening safely, for staff and public alike, will be the primary concern and is likely to require restrictions on both services available and visitor numbers. Close engagement and cooperation between the County Council, our delivery partners and Hampshire Constabulary, will be critical to the safe and effective reintroduction of these services. Contrary to some unhelpful recent reports, the County Council's position in this regard is closely in line with the vast majority of other local authorities in the rest of the country.

37. Highways Maintenance work was initially restricted to essential and safety related works, and reactive works in more rural areas, but some reactive works have now resumed, and larger scale safety related planned maintenance work due to start in early May. Work was also stopped on County Council infrastructure construction projects, again in part due to public concerns but also mainly due to material supply restrictions. Some preparatory and time critical works have re-started in late April, following re-

opening of the materials supply chain. There is also evidence of more private sector construction activity now taking place.

38. Public transport services have been significantly reduced, following huge falls in passenger numbers, but core services are still running to provide access for essential journeys. The County Council has agreed to maintain support for subsidised services and also community transport. Bus operators are also being supported through temporary additional Government funding to maintain essential service operations. Planning applications are still being registered and processed. In environmental services, work continues, including site survey activities, where they can be carried out in full accordance with social distancing and safe working practices. Finally, the Economic Development service is playing an increasingly important role in preparations for recovery and supporting local businesses, in consultation with district council partners and the Local Enterprise Partnerships (see below).

Culture Community and Business-Related Services (CCBS)

39. The wide range services within CCBS means that a considerable variety of challenges and pressures have presented, and a number of services have also made a very significant contribution to the management of the response to the current situation. The initial stages of the lockdown saw huge pressures on the County Parks and Rights of Way network, with, for example, an estimated 4000+ visitors to Lepe on Mother's Day. The pressures meant that all County Park carparks have had to be closed, including the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens. The countryside service continues to manage high numbers of contacts from landowners concerned about the increased use of the rights of way network, often by people who are not familiar with the country code.
40. All Libraries closed very shortly after the first Covid19 measures were implemented. The library service immediately invested in more digital books and there has been a significant increase in the number of digital borrowers. The service has also developed a range of other on-line services such as baby rhymetime and essay writing competitions. The Outdoor Centres have also now all closed and rebooking arrangements are in place for school residential customers. The Registration Service, following government guidelines, cancelled all weddings until the end of the first period of lockdown, and has now proceeded with a second wave of cancellations to cover the second period. The service is continuing to manage death bed weddings. Substantial revisions in process have been adopted to manage death registrations which are now by telephone. All birth registrations are postponed but where needed for adoption proceedings these are being undertaken by exception. All of these services either rely entirely or heavily on their generated income for funding. That means that the income for the department is being severely impacted. Equally nearly all of the many

thousands of volunteer hours we have in support of key services has had to stop.

41. HC3S, the County Council's catering service, has performed and adapted exceptionally since the start of the crisis. The service provides school meals for nearly all of Hampshire's primary schools and about a third of the secondary schools. Throughout all the changes to school opening, eligibility for pupils who would continue to go to school and school opening across the Easter holidays, through a huge logistical exercise the service managed to provide a meal to every child and teacher who needed one, across all schools and without a failure. They have also provided meals to pupils in schools who were not previously customers where the private catering company had been unable to maintain provision. A similar picture can be seen across County Supplies who have managed to maintain provision of high demand items to those who needed them most urgently through active order and stock management. County Supplies have also taken on a key role in the warehouse set up and logistics for the LRF distribution centre at Segensworth. This performance was singled out in a recent military led review.
42. A significant number of staff have remained on site due to the nature of their duties and they have managed this situation extremely professionally. The facilities management staff – including the building management teams and the cleaning teams – have earned great praise for the way they responded to the epidemic with the increase in their responsibilities that it has brought. In the early stages cleaning routines were hugely enhanced, with deep cleaning where necessary. Many County Council buildings have now been carefully shut down (this requires consideration of a range of building related risks including Legionella) but others remain open for essential staff working. Hampshire Transport Management couriers, fleet and workshops remain fully operational and are supporting critical activities including school meals, recorded deliveries, workshop maintenance and fuel supplies.
43. The Hampshire Coroner and the coronial staff, and the Registration staff who manage death certificates, have been extremely stretched over the period. The Senior Coroner, who covers Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton, chairs the Excess Deaths Action Group (EDAG) for the LRF. The coronial officer service is linking with colleagues on the Isle of Wight to ensure resilience across both authorities can be maintained. The Deaths Registration service has trained a significant number of additional staff drawn from the libraries and trading standards services to enable it to handle the worst-case peak in the projections.
44. Finally, across property related services, a range of challenges are being addressed. Estates is considering many requests for relief from rent payments. Much desk-based design, architectural and strategic land work can

progress at present to ensure the authority is as well placed as possible to support the construction industry recovery in Hampshire in due course.

Corporate Resources

45. Corporate Resources' key focus is enabling our colleagues in front line services to provide vital services to the public, this includes Hampshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, including schools across both Counties, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Fire & Rescue, the three partnered London Boroughs and a variety of other public sector organisations reliant on HCC corporate support. The substantial majority of staff are now successfully working from home albeit this does in some areas affect the quality of service and productivity. All services are holding up strongly but that could decline if significant staff numbers are affected by the virus or if the situation continues for a significantly lengthy period.
46. In the Integrated Business Centre (IBC) the focus is on ensuring staff and suppliers continue to be paid, and income collected. A small group of staff rotate coming into the office to deal with "hard" mail but predominantly the service is operating on-line, including having had to switch off the telephony. In Finance the focus is on properly recording and projecting additional expenditure and loss of income, plus the impact of non-delivery of savings with Departments, ensuring sufficient cashflow on a daily basis as well as continuing with the year-end closure of the accounts. The Pension Team are ensuring that Local Government pensioners are paid across over 300 employers with some staff still having to be office based and the telephony contact centre having been negatively impacted. In HR, the focus is on supporting managers and staff to operate using adapted HR policies to meet the current challenging operating model whilst also focussing on the health & wellbeing of employees now and into the recovery period and beyond. There is also a focus on creating additional digital learning materials to support the swift rollout of new Digital Technology to support new ways of working.
47. At this time, IT and connectivity have never been more critical. Credit is due to IT colleagues who have been focussed on significantly speeding up the roll out of new technologies which are now supporting our new ways of working. Without this move the organisation would not have been in such a strong position particularly regarding working from home. Most IT staff are providing support through home working. The support desk is keeping on top of requests, a rota of 6 specialist roles are still office based in case a critical IT incident occurs. Internal Audit are currently working with all partners to reprioritise current plans and also amend them to take account of the significant new risks COVID-19 has introduced to each organisation's operating model.
48. HantsDirect is now offering a 100% on-line service to enable non-essential customer contact activity to be delivered remotely. This includes the County

Council's "front door" customer enquiries for General Enquiries, School Admissions, Blue Badge, Concessionary Travel, Libraries, Countryside, Highways and Waste Services. The telephone lines for Children's Services and Registrations remain open and operating effectively (and safely) by an on-site team based at Fareham Parkway. The agreed restructure and geographical relocation of the HantsDirect Service has been postponed from May 2020 until September 2020, with the exception of the Children's Services teams that will still move in May for service reasons.

Human Resources – Our People

49. The implications for our people and organisation in this current situation are far reaching and, to at least some extent, unpredictable. HCC staff are facing the same pressures and stresses as the rest of the community. For many of those staff those pressures and stresses stretch deeply into their professional lives as they adapt for or join directly in the fight against the pandemic. The length as well as the depth of the crisis will prove especially demanding. On the other hand, as this report indicates, we are seeing the very best of public service within the County Council and doubtless there can be renewed pride and confidence in the future of all services. Woven into all the HR activity has been a focus on the well-being (physical and emotional) of our staff with close cross working between HR and Public Health.
50. The heart of an effective HR function lies in its relationship with the business and it is in this area that the impact of Covid-19 has been felt most keenly. The demand on our HR Business Partners, who directly lead the relationship with service managers, has significantly increased and required some additional redeployment. It therefore follows that the demand on the HR Policy team has also increased as the organisation has reviewed a number of policies to adapt to the exceptional circumstances. Examples of where temporary adjustments have been made include; the approach to, and timeline for, HR casework (performance, attendance, disciplinary etc); extensions to the eligibility requirements for overtime payments; and additional clarity around the authority of managers to 'instruct' staff to follow a management direction; the introduction of agile processes to allow for staff to "re-designate" to roles where demands are highest. HR managers are also working with the businesses to deploy new employee arrangements where necessary and appropriate, for example furlough and staff testing.
51. Key to all of the above has been maintaining positive relationships with our Trade Union colleagues. HR have increased the regularity with which they are meeting (virtually) and have encouraged them to maintain an open dialogue about the full range of issues of concern. Beyond discussing the changes, we have needed to make to policy from a management perspective they have been keen to discuss concerns around PPE, staff voluntary or instructed re-deployment as well as Transformation and on-going or planned consultations with staff. Inevitably, the well-being of union members remains

a key concern for Trade Unions. The County Council's broader and well-established approach to the physical and mental well-being of all staff has provided a solid base for these conditions.

Corporate Communications

52. The County Council is delivering a comprehensive and targeted communications strategy. A wide range of channels have been used in promoting the messages, which are summarised below:

- **Social media** campaigns have been created and targeted, including animations in some cases, which have been received well, with good reach achieved in all cases.
- Significant amounts of information relating to national guidance, changes to County Council services and support for residents have been communicated to residents **via press releases**.
- Dedicated Covid-19 **web pages** have been created and published on the County Council's website. These provide helpful information for Hampshire residents including links to national guidance, updates on changes to services and sources of local help and support www.hants.gov.uk
- Covid-19 tailored **daily briefings** continue to be provided to Hampshire MPs, Hampshire County Councillors and Hampshire district council Chief Executives. This briefing is also shared with the County Council's key partners, as well as all town and parish councils, via the Hampshire Association of Local Council, who also receive Covid-19 related updates via our regular e-bulletin for local councils.
- The Corporate Management Team have placed particular focus on all forms of direct communication with staff and this is being particularly well received as a counter to the isolating implications of remote working.
- Statutory communication in the form of a **digital letter from the Leader** was delivered to over 5000,000 email addresses, with an estimated open rate of 70%, informing residents of key changes to County Council services, as well as providing signposting to sources of help for vulnerable people, via hants.gov.uk.
- The new HantsHelp4Vulnerable helpline has been supported by an online campaign which reached over 108,000 people via *Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn*, as well as press releases and interviews with

County Council spokespeople on **local radio and regional television.**

- A critical component of the future communications challenge will be the support to the community and other agencies as people and services have to adjust gradually but precisely to what is bound to be a graduated reduction in lock down measures.

Recovery

53. As explained above, the recovery phase is the critical aspect of any crisis management process, which must follow at least immediately after, or run concurrent with the latter stages of the response phase. Recovery is typically the responsibility of local government. In the case of this exceptional crisis, while we know that the response phase almost certainly has many weeks if not months to run, there is general consensus that recovery must be planned from now. This is not least because of the anticipated scale of the long-term damage that is being caused, including to the economy, as well as the finances of the County Council. The LRF recovery processes have now commenced on behalf of the wider HIOW partnership, led by Portsmouth City Council, with HCC officers populating a number of key roles. The position of the County Council is to do all in its powers and capability to support the wider recovery, under the shared understanding that each agency must prioritise its own recovery programme and activity. In economic terms this must also include the two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) that cover the county of Hampshire.
54. To this end, the Gold Command structure has now commissioned a full Recovery programme, reporting to Gold Command, under the leadership of the Director of ETE, with political leadership from the Deputy Leader.
55. Within the HIOW LRF mechanisms: “Recovery is defined as the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency, but it is more than simply the replacement of what has been destroyed and the rehabilitation of those affected.” To this end the following key objective has been set for the HCC recovery phase:
- To restore the personal, social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities of Hampshire, and to restore County Council services and operations to support and drive this process.

56. The initial scoping work will be defined by these proposed broad workstreams:

- **HCC Financial Recovery** – reflecting the HLOW work and the ongoing HCC work led by Corporate Resources, including the T19/T21 programme impacts and maximising cost recovery from central government;
- **HCC Service Recovery** with sub themes suggested for each major service area (Adults Health and Care, Childrens Social Care, ETE, CCBS etc) plus schools and for HCC corporate/organisational/democratic operations);
- **HCC Staff welfare and wellbeing** including organisational development and wider Hampshire community wellbeing and support;
- **Economic Recovery** – closely linked to LRF work on co-ordinating economic recovery and business support work across the HLOW area;
- **Community Engagement** including facilitating recognition of the impacts of Covid-19 through commemoration of loss, recognition of the contributions made to support communities and a strong on-going communications element to secure community awareness and buy-in;
- **Review and Learning** from the experience and response to covid-19 to develop and improve HCC and its services and operations and to reinforce public confidence in the resilience of the County Council to support, serve and protect the communities and businesses of Hampshire.

57. In the context of the last point, it is suggested that the Recovery work should embrace the opportunities afforded to advance the pre Covid 19 priorities of the County Council around responding to the Climate Emergency and delivering the Hampshire 2050 work. These objectives would help Recovery to orientate to deliver a healthier and more resilient County post Covid-19, seeking to address some of the major risks to long term prosperity and quality of life in the County.

58. The following working objectives have been supported by Gold Group as initial terms of reference for the Recovery work. They are to:

- Develop an impact assessment for the COVID 19 pandemic in Hampshire;
- Develop a Financial Recovery strategy to secure maximum reimbursement of pandemic costs from central government and to protect the financial integrity and resilience of the County Council and its essential public services;
- Restore County Council services prioritising focus where necessary on those most affected by the pandemic or driving recovery;
- Establish a pro-active and integrated approach to business support and assistance with businesses actively engaged and supported in requests for assistance from Government programmes, LEPs and business support agencies;
- Ensure that critical infrastructure and transport systems are operational and following latest government and public health guidance on safe operation to support recovery;
- Help those traumatised by their experience of the impact of COVID 19 on themselves, their families and their loved ones address their trauma (and grieve their loss);
- Celebrate and commemorate the contributions made to support our communities through the incident and give the public opportunities to express their appreciation;
- Take all opportunities include climate change mitigation and resilience measures and Hampshire 2050 objectives into the recovery process to ensure future resilience and progress towards long term improvements to the communities, the economy, environment and quality of life in Hampshire;
- Review the Pandemic response within the County Council and take all the opportunities to Learn from the review and implement any learning outcomes to improve resilience and response in the future.

59. Cabinet is invited to comment on these terms and to support the general approach, noting that this is a substantial and long-term programme which will need to evolve and adapt as it moves forward, including with regular future reports to Cabinet.

Conclusion

60. This is a necessarily detailed report as it seeks to brief Cabinet about the scale, extent and longevity of the impact of the Covid 19 crisis as it impacts on the County Council, its services and its community. In truth, even in this level of detail, the report cannot comprehensively describe the full picture of the way the County Council and especially its front line managers and staff, have risen to this challenge, in all cases with tremendous commitment, skill and resolve, in several cases with undoubted heroism. The Secretary of State recently described local government staff as the “unsung heroes” of this crisis and that is a phrase which resonates with all who have witnessed this work at first hand. This report should be seen in conjunction with other papers before this Cabinet meeting, including those considering the wider financial implications, the changes required on the local authority’s governance systems, and some particular challenges around domestic abuse.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An EIA has been undertaken and no impacts have been identified on groups with protected characteristics from the proposals set out in the Report'