

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	14 July 2020
Title:	A Progress Report of The County Council's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis
Report From:	Chief Executive

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Purpose of this Report

1. This is the second in what will from now be a series of regular reports to Cabinet, summarising the County Council's continuing responses to and process (and leadership) of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet should:

2. Note the contents of this report as a further 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. Note in particular the additional developing initiatives that have been introduced since the past report including the support to the wider care home sector, the preparations for increasing access to schools, and in particular the beginning of the outbreak recovery planning;
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 further 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, from early May 2020. 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, through continuing departmental updates, but heavily reflects our formal partnership with the sub-regional and interagency arrangements under the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The report also summarises and the local authority's developing 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 (partial) closure but targeted retention of services for vulnerable and key workers' children, and more latterly the complex implementation of plans to gradually return schools to a wider re-opening;
 - 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 beginning of the phased reintroduction of a range of "place" services from the oversight of construction projects and waste disposal services, through to the managed re-opening of country parks and open spaces facilities in the light of the changes in lockdown measures nationally;
 - A summary of the very rapid and effective work between HCC and the private, voluntary and independent care home sector to mobilise support for that sector and transfer some £18 million of funds directly to providers;

- A brief explanation of the introduction of the County Council’s new leadership role with regard to the development and implementation of Outbreak Management Plans as the key methodology for safely managing potential further reductions in general lockdown (which is also a subject of a separate report to this Cabinet);
 - An update 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 progress of 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 was to adhere closely to Government guidance and medical advice, summarised initially by 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 remains exceptional throughout. Of course, in the period covered by this report that Government advice has shifted to: stay alert; control the virus; save lives; and as a responsible local authority and public health body that maxim and the changing measures that have come with it, continue to inform and guide these responses. 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 summarise the initial progress of the “recovery phase” which is the key component of any crisis management. One of the distinguishing features of this crisis is 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 remain profound. Separate summary financial papers will continue to map those increasingly challenging issues.

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

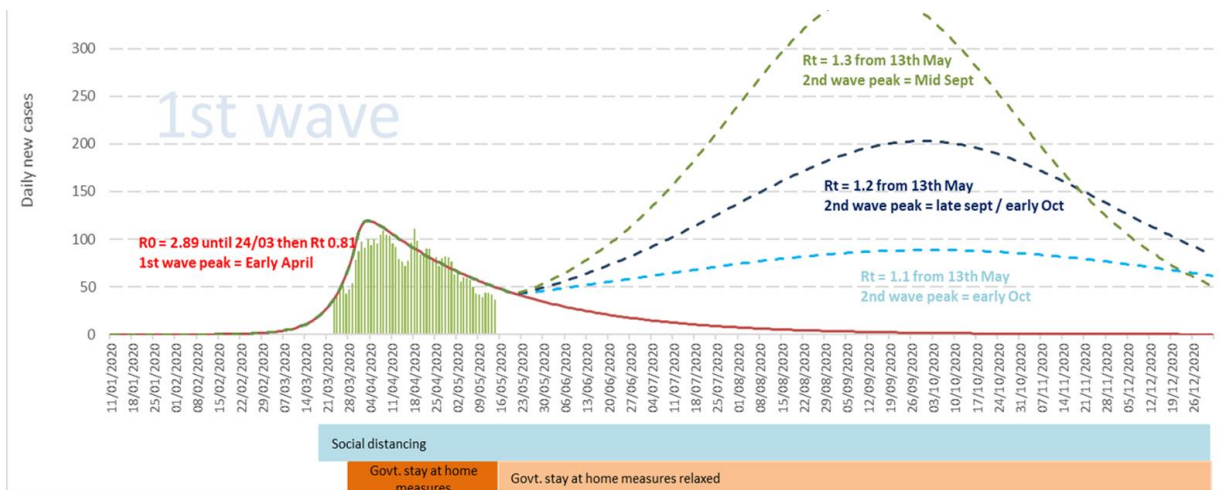
with the activities of the inter-agency, pan-Hampshire Local Resilience Forum, the County Council introduced its emergency planning structure on 18 March 2020. This includes a strategic Gold Command, chaired by the Chief Executive and made up of the Corporate Management Team and relevant key officers, an operational corporate Silver Command and departmental Bronze Commands offering tactical service leadership. That structure is now supplemented by two key additional groups, one for recovery and one for the outbreak management planning.

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 late 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 is now additionally advised that a loss of sense of smell may also be a key symptom. The virus 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. There is further developing evidence about possible increased risks to BAME communities and those individuals with obesity. It remains 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 less than 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 7 July 2020, there are 3,392 diagnosed cases in Hampshire. The first peak was well managed through social distancing and effective planning. The modelling of the virus suggests further waves of disease will develop during the Autumn. We are working to manage further waves of disease.
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 a predictive assessment of the potential severity and timing of a second peak or wave of the outbreak, relative to the first in April 2020. This is based on three scenarios linked to the future "R number" (the analysis of the reproductive pace and spread of the virus) and the prevalence of infection. Firstly, it should be stressed that it will not be feasible to construct an R value for localities or even the county of Hampshire. It is a broad statistical analysis over time and a wide population – it is likely we may see regional R values in time. We know that the first peak was based on a very high R number but from what was a low base of prevalence at that time. Crucially, that first peak, for all of the challenges and tragedies it brought, was contained within the capacity of the NHS so the worst national calamity was avoided. We also know, as we have come gradually down from the first peak through near total lockdown, that to avoid any second wave (as per the lower red line in this graph) would depend on continued high levels of lockdown that keep R well below the value of 1. But the closer the R number gets consistently towards or beyond a rate of 1.2, the more severe would be the second peak and the more intense would be the pressures upon the NHS and wider services. That is why the new local authority public health duties of outbreak control planning, discussed further in this report and separately to this Cabinet, will be so critical to the management of and recovery from the crisis.



18. As the pandemic has developed and the impact of the interventions is becoming better understood we have seen an easing of some of the lockdown measures but importantly the two metre social distancing rule has remained in place to date. There is now a general consensus that the country is currently in a period towards the middle of the end of the first peak or surge in the spread of the virus. 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. As 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, with increased local leadership through the Outbreak Control plan.
19. The programme of testing for 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. Finally testing was made available for everyone symptomatic. Testing programmes have developed through a variety of delivery models. Under the Director of Public Health these models are being reviewed to ensure they meet local needs. The progress and coordination of testing, and a stronger local authority role in that coordination will be key to the effective management of outbreak control plans.
20. We have now moved to a phase, as the start of outbreak management, 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. It is intended to be a more targeted and "surgical" approach to management of the spread of the disease which can apply controls which do not have such widespread and economically as well as socially disruptive effects. The contact tracing will be the NHS Test and Trace programme overseen by

Public Health England and Local Directors of Public Health. . The Director of Public Health was helping to lead the early implementation of the Test and Trace and Mobile phone app programme through his leadership role on the Isle of Wight. At the time of writing the pilot app used on the Isle of Wight is now being rejected in favour of a different model which will take further time to develop and implement.

21. In line with Government guidelines an Outbreak Control Plan for Hampshire is being developed (and is subject of a separate report before this Cabinet meeting). The leadership of this approach has been devolved to the upper tier (public health) authority. The Government has allocated £600 million nationally to support implementation. An officer board (akin to a health protection board) has been established as has a parallel political and leader-led board. The Plan is centred around 7 themes:
 - a. Planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools
 - b. Identifying and planning how to manage other high-risk places, locations and communities of interest
 - c. Identifying methods for local testing to ensure a swift response that is accessible to the entire population.
 - d. Assessing local and regional contact tracing and infection control capability in complex settings
 - e. Integrating national and local data and scenario planning through the Joint Biosecurity Centre Playbook
 - f. Supporting vulnerable local people to get help to self-isolate
 - g. Establishing governance structures.

22. A vaccine is still 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 during 2021, if a vaccine can be developed.

Public Health - Leadership

23. 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).

24. 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 ensuring 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

25. The department has moved positively to maintain its critical functions throughout the on-set of the COVID-19 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.

26. On 14 May the Minister for Care, Helen Whately MP, published a letter identifying the support required to the care sector, with particular emphasis on support to the care home sector. Alongside a range of support offers ranging from clinical support, through to infection prevention and control training and access to other support through social care and health partners a national fund of £600m was announced. The first tranche of money has been distributed largely on a per capita basis of care home beds, with some £7.9m distributed to care homes by 29th May. The monies were distributed as quickly as possible in recognition of the pressures on the sector, including through short term use of County Council reserves ahead of payment from Government. Hampshire County Council received positive endorsement of the approach and detailed plan in support of the care home sector. This funding has been used to support a range of key areas of permissible spend; 23% has been used to safely isolate residents within care homes, 27% to restrict staff movements, 23% to ensure staff self-isolating receive their full wages, with the remaining 27% used on a range of measures to keep care homes Covid-19 safe. Plans are now being developed by Hampshire County Council, working with Hampshire CCG Partnership, Hampshire Care Association, HealthWatch Hampshire and local CQC inspectors for the second tranche of funding due to be distributed in July.

27. Our direct care provision, alongside NHS partners, has seen a significant amount of acute hospital provision freed-up in anticipation of COVID-19 cases. Initially, some 40–50% of the available acute hospital beds were made available. The restoration of some elements of NHS service delivery has now commenced and bed occupancy has increased as the incidence of COVID-19

care in hospitals has decreased. Currently some 20% of acute hospital provision remains available. Capacity planning and modelling has identified the need to ensure any future waves can be accommodated and work remains ongoing across all our acute hospital systems to plan for such an eventuality, as well as ensuring the restoration of NHS services.

28. 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 and the ongoing consequences and impacts upon care homes, residents, families and staff will continue to be significant in the coming months.
29. Impacts upon the wider social care sector continue to be felt and pressures are increasing, given the duration of the lockdown. There is growing evidence of family distress – particularly for younger adults supported by family carers. The suspension of many usual services, including day opportunities and respite are going to be increasingly important to reinstate in the coming weeks. Staff and provider partners continue to offer regular contact to individuals and their families, this especially offers vital safeguarding support but cannot act as replacement for the restoration of usual services and support.
30. As referenced above, the leadership of HIOW'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.
31. These arrangements, brought into place with exceptional rapidity, continue to operate well. However, there are a number of key challenges that are being actively managed, given announcements made in late April that the national programme would cease at the end of July. All partners across Hampshire continue to work positively together in supporting shielded and vulnerable residents, with a particular focus upon transitioning those in receipt of the national shielding programmes direct food delivery arrangements into local arrangements. Overall, during our response to date some 80,000 people have been subject to support in a variety of ways, across Hampshire. **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-19>

Children's Services

32. 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 (e.g. residential care) in the event of having fewer staff available to work should the situation worsen.
33. 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.
34. 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 of this business as usual approach in the interests of protecting vulnerable children during the crisis. The Hampshire MASH continues to function to high standards which is essential to the safe running of children's services generally. Children's 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. We can expect (and are beginning now to experience) 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. Work is well underway to ensure additional resources can be redeployed within the service to address this increased demand. Work is also underway to increase face to face visits with children and families as lockdown measures begin to ease.
35. Since the formal closure of schools was announced on the 20 March 2020, practically all schools have remained at least partially open to provide levels of education and emergency childcare to children of critical workers and those children who are vulnerable. During the week prior to half term around 7,400 pupils were attending daily which is around 4% 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. In addition, a large number of schools remained open during the May half-term period and we had good geographical coverage of available spaces for parents of critical workers.

36. Primary schools have been asked to broaden their offer and open for more children from the 1 June 2020. Schools have been following the public health guidance around this phased and limited re-opening. Recognising that younger children are unlikely to be able to socially isolate schools were asked to put in place “bubbles of no more than 15 pupils in a classroom”. The children and staff within each bubble then remain separate from the rest of the children and staff within the school by having separate start, finish, play and lunchtimes. Schools have planned diligently creating the maximum number of bubbles the teaching spaces allow taking into account the numbers of staff they have available to teach. When allocating spaces to children the DfE has set clear expectations. The children of critical workers and vulnerable children are given priority, followed by children in reception year, followed by Year 1, then Year 6 in that order. In the first week back after half term around 25,000 children have been in attendance in Hampshire schools. The general attendance in Hampshire has been much higher than the national average throughout the pandemic.
37. 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 1400 children open to children’s social care are attending school regularly which is around 30% 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 monitored 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.
38. Secondary schools are being asked to prepare for some face to face contact with Year 10 from 15 June. The guidance is that no more than 25% of the Year 10 should be on the site at any one time and the main delivery model should continue to be on-line learning and working at home.
39. The Homes to School Transport (HTST) service have shared a set of principles with schools to support planning for wider opening of education settings. These principles included parents being encouraged to take children to school wherever possible, in line with Government guidance; accordingly, some children eligible for HTST are being taken to school by parents, with

mileage rates are being paid to those parents by the County Council . Prior to Easter, approximately 100 routes were operating and by the end of the first week of June, more than 300 routes were running. It is anticipated that the majority of the remaining capacity in the HTST system will be used next week as year 10 students return to school as a result of the need to socially distance wherever possible on transport. This means, for example, that a 54-seat coach will only be able to transport 17 children.

40. 72% of Early Years childcare providers are now open and providing childcare, with a further 4.5% able to open when there is parental demand. Children's Services continue to support the sector through webinars, updating and sharing regular frequently asked questions and through responding to individual requests. Childcare is being provided to all vulnerable and keyworker children who have requested it, however, as numbers of children attending increase, some providers will reach capacity in terms of the places they are able to offer whilst maintaining 'bubbles' and social distancing. Financial uncertainty continues to be a significant issue for the sector. Of particular concern are:

- Smaller settings with restricted space who face challenges in managing occupancy and infection controls. Restricting the number of children attending will result in sustained loss of income.
- Community run provision where the complexity and volume of tasks faced by volunteers/parents running such settings in the new context may result in closure as they feel ill equipped to cope.
- The medium-term sustainability of childcare providers given the complexity of business and financial planning during such uncertain times.

The County Council continues to raise the concerns of the childcare sector to central government.

41. In terms of the major Children's Services capital construction projects, the majority of sites remained in operation and the limited number of contractors that suspended work are now back progressing. All construction sites are adhering to government guidance which currently states that "Construction can continue where it is done in line with public health guidance". Adherence to published industry protocols will be overseen and risks regularly assessed. All contracts are being closely monitored. Non- essential schools repair and maintenance work was, at first, suspended but projects are now restarting. All schemes are being reviewed on a case by case basis and, when we are comfortable about being able to undertake the work safely, work will commence. It is expected that productivity will be lower than before the crisis and projects will be programmed in collaboration with the industry to ensure resources and management arrangements are suitable for COVID-19 safe compliance. This is likely to have an effect on some end-dates, but the

industry is working with HCC to minimise the impact. We will consult with individual schools to agree the scope of work and planned delivery.

Economy Transport and Environment (ETE)

42. Most staff in ETE remain 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. The County Council, along with most other upper tier authorities, re-opened the HWRCs in early May, following revised Government Guidance and regulations in respect of essential travel. The sites have been re-opened with provisions to ensure safe working and to enable social distancing requirements to be maintained on the sites, which means in effect significantly reduced site capacity, with limited numbers of vehicles and people allowed on site at the same time; this has effectively reduced volumes to around 25% of levels of throughput for the equivalent time last year. The re-opening of the HWRCs has, as expected, attracted very significant levels of demand for access, despite advice to limit visits to essential trips only. The resulting access pressure on sites led to significant queuing and opening hours were increased and additional security and traffic management measures were implemented in May. However the queueing issues continued to present both road safety problems and issues for access to businesses and local residents in areas around the sites, and therefore further steps were therefore needed to reduce queuing at sites, and work began on bringing forward proposals for a booking system. The long queues also led to some minor public order issues as well as aggression to site and security staff. Hampshire Constabulary have been consulted throughout.
43. A new pre-booking system for HWRCs was introduced from 15th June, initially providing around 30,000 appointments each week for HWRC visits, which could be booked up to 48 hours ahead. The booking system has now been extended to allow booking further ahead, and increase available slots to 35,000 each week. This appears to have significantly reduced queueing and helped to better balance demand and supply, though there remain some issues with confusing system messages about future slot availability and demand remains very high, whilst capacity is 25% of pre-covid levels in order to provide safe working and social distancing.
44. Highways Maintenance work was initially restricted to essential and safety related works, partly due to reduced material supplies. Both planned and reactive maintenance work has now been re-started and has particularly sought to take advantage of reduced traffic to progress certain schemes.. Traffic volumes started to rise with the easing of lockdown restrictions at the beginning of June, and they are expected to rise significantly once town centres and other businesses re-open on 15th June. Whilst levels were still below pre-COVID-19 volumes in May and early June, it provided greater

opportunities to complete maintenance work with reduced disruption before the full easing of lockdown measures.

45. Work was also stopped on County Council infrastructure construction projects mainly due to material supply restrictions. Work has now restarted across the County on Transport Capital Programme projects, and the private sector construction industry is also returning to greater levels of activity, albeit with restrictions to support safe working and social distancing. It is too early at this stage to establish the full impacts of social distancing and 'COVID-19 safe' working practices on construction activity, but productivity will be reduced and it is likely that this will lead to lengthening construction times and additional costs on many schemes.
46. 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. As the return to work becomes more widespread with businesses and retailers re-opening, public transport demand will increase, which will need to be managed with reduced capacities on trains and buses to maintain social distancing. It is expected that further increases in service level will happen from 6th July onwards, as more businesses, leisure activities and shops re-open.
47. The County Council is actively developing and implementing proposals for temporary measures to support greater walking and cycling around towns and employment areas, which facilitates social distancing (e.g. increasing footway/cycleway capacity). The first tranche of Government funding from the Department of Transport has been received and an ambitious programme, averaging around 12 schemes per week is being delivered in the initial period. This programme supports the Town Centre recovery work being promoted by the Government and locally through the LEPs. In a particular initiative HCC has been instrumental in coordinating support to help sustain the Gosport Ferry given the exceptional nature of that service to its local communities.
48. 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 continues to play a critical role in preparations for recovery and supporting local businesses, in consultation with district council partners and the Local Enterprise Partnerships (see below). As the economic impact of the pandemic on Hampshire becomes clearer, the direction of economic support and interventions will need to become more focussed and evidence led. Unemployment will rise sharply nationally, and the south east will be more affected than in the last recession. The local economy was hit harder than the national average at the outset of the crisis in March and has some hard-hit sectors such as aerospace/aviation and the visitor economy. Retaining assets

such as Southampton Airport and securing big planned infrastructure improvements such as M3 Junction 9, will also need to be at the forefront of our longer term thinking in the economic recovery response. There are some encouraging signs of the start of economic recovery, including interest in investment in Hampshire, but it is very early in the recovery process, and the depth of lost economic activity and outputs is unprecedented in modern times.

Culture Community and Business-Related Services (CCBS)

49. From mid-May the focus within CCBS moved to recovery of the many services that either had to shut completely or significantly changed their delivery processes as lockdown occurred. All recovery is taking place in line with the government's timeline and announcements. However, it is important to emphasise that many services have continued to operate throughout the lockdown period and have provided invaluable support to the COVID-19 response across the County Council.
50. The planning for the recovery of services has involved extensive work on site-specific risk assessments within the overarching County Council approach to COVID-19 and other risk more generally. The emphasis is on staff and customer safety. This activity, led for the County Council across all sites by Facilities Management, is critical to the local authority's phased return to increased physical occupation of its buildings. For those services who depend almost entirely, or entirely, on income generation, this is a vital period and everything possible is being done to ensure that services can become fully operational again as quickly as possible while maintaining a safe environment for staff and users. In many cases this is involving changes to the service offer and a diversification of activities.
51. The Country Parks opened their carparks and toilets on Wednesday 13 May, in line with the government announcement that people could travel further to exercise. The food outlets are also now open, following government guidelines. Car parking was initially limited to 60% capacity which then was raised to 85% capacity once all systems and processes had been tested. The bank holiday weekend brought challenges at Lepe which was full by 9:30am with parking on double yellow lines. Further planning was undertaken with Highways to assure road safety in the area. Both the farm attractions and Titchfield Haven will open on 6 July in line with government guidance on ticketed visitor attractions. Countryside teams are very busy undertaking seasonal vegetation clearance and rights of way maintenance.
52. Hampshire Records Office remains closed to the public, but is making preparations and finalising risk assessments prior to re-opening. The records management staff have been continuing the service of urgent file retrievals for legal and social care and have given considerable support to the Registration service in certificate management and issue.

53. Calshot car park and slip ways are now fully open as are the toilets. Camping is re-opening imminently at Calshot, Tile Barn and Runways End. Indoor 'sports' facilities at the Centres remain closed but are prepared to re-open as soon as government guidance allows. All residential courses at the Outdoor Centres remain closed and postponements or full refunds have been offered to all school bookings through to the end of July and will continue on a rolling basis until re-opening can be achieved. This has been very well received by schools. Plans are well developed to make alternative 'COVID-19-proof' activity offers to the public over the summer. The café at Calshot has now re-opened. The Hampshire Mountain Centre in Wales remains completely closed in line with Welsh policy at this time.
54. Hamble Harbour is now fully open and operating normally. Activity from boat owners and other small craft is predictably high and is leading to good slipway launch revenues which will help to offset other COVID-19 losses if the activity continues at a high level.
55. The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens opened to visitors on 8 June. Initially numbers of visitors are being managed through an online booking system with time slots. The restaurants and shop remain closed for the time being but plans are in hand for re-opening as soon as practicable.
56. Libraries will be re-opening on 6 July for short visits and with reduced opening hours. However the Library Service has had its digital services open throughout the Covid lockdowns and has been developing further offers throughout the period. These are proving highly successful and are attracting national attention. Demand for on-line services has increased dramatically, currently averaging 12,000 customers actively using Borrowbox to read eBooks each day, an increase of over 58% since the beginning of March. This equates to an 84% increase in daily loans, averaging more than 3,000 a day. The total number of registered Borrowbox users now equates to a quarter of the customers who borrowed a physical book in the year 2019 to 2020.
57. The new Ready Reads' service – where library staff select books according to a reader's preferences which customers can then collect from their local branch – has been used by over 3,000 people since it started in mid June.
58. Many of the services that were previously enjoyed in libraries are now being delivered using social media. The reach of Facebook posts has increased over 4800% since the beginning of March with 18,000 people a day seeing a post from Hampshire Libraries. Videos containing interactive story times and other activities are being watched 1,700 times a day on average.
59. The home library service re-started deliveries in the week of 18 May and these have been extremely well received. All these new and enhanced schemes offer new opportunities for people to access a wide range of library services.

60. The Registration service has now firmly established its Death Registration service as a phone-only process, and this is working well. The service re-started marriage ceremonies and birth registrations on 6 July.
61. Trading standards have developed new processes around market surveillance of PPE equipment and trading during lockdown. Weights and measures inspections continue and Buy with Confidence audits are being carried out.
62. Hampshire Scientific and Asbestos services are all open and functioning effectively. Hampshire Scientific staff have been working flexibly over a seven day week to keep all services running and remain Covid19 compliant within their office and laboratory space. Asbestos are undertaking site visits in line with construction industry needs.
63. All Hampshire Transport Management activities continue to run with appropriate measures in place. This includes essential vehicle maintenance for the highways fleet and Skanska and the courier service which has diversified its activities to accommodate the County Council's COVID-19 response needs. The public MOT service is now fully operational again.
64. HC3S, the County Council's catering operation, has continued to supply all its school customers during the lockdown period, catering for those pupils and teachers who have been in school throughout the lockdown period. The service has continued to support schools through close liaison to provide meals for the additional children who returned to school from 1 June.
65. County Supplies are continuing to support the warehouse operation at Segensworth. They are now also proving invaluable in managing the procurement, in volume, of the materials needed to ensure that service and offices across the County Council, including schools, can provide a safe working environment.
66. Construction and maintenance activity within Property Services has now broadly returned to a business as usual position. The Property Services compliance team are supporting across the HCC and Partner Estates to re-energise building systems in buildings 'hibernated' during lockdown. The Category Management Team are supporting HCC and Partner estates to ensure that service arrangements such as cleaning, waste collection and grounds maintenance keep pace with service recovery and address additional requirements. The Estates Management team is continuing to support discussions and decisions on rent relief and will support planning for recovery of any deferred rent that accrues during the lockdown period. Hampshire Print and Document service is operating as normal.
67. The department is also leading on the work to establish a safe and effective office environment and the procedures governing staff who are currently working at home returning to office-based workplaces. This is a far from

complete picture and the initial emphasis has been placed on those who operationally need to be in the workplace and then on those who, for various reasons, find working at home particularly difficult. Under the COVID-19 guidance on the management of office accommodation it is estimated that a utilisation level of around 25% is around the maximum to provide a safe working environment. That clearly has many implications for a wider return to the workplace for office-based staff and will be considered within a wider review of working patterns and practice in the 'new' paradigm post-COVID-19.

Corporate Resources

68. Corporate Resources' key focus is enabling 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 have been 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. Following the Prime Minister's Announcement on 10 May and fully reviewing the guidance, there is only one change to current work arrangements for staff, which is the unpausing of HR casework face-to-face meetings otherwise all remains unchanged and this will be kept under review in line with any changes in Government requirements and/or Public Health advice.
69. 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. Payment performance to suppliers remained at normal levels in April and May (99% of invoices were paid within 30 days from the receipt of a valid invoice) and payroll accuracy continues to be in excess of 99%. Customer Satisfaction is at c85% for the two-month period, demonstrating the on-going success of the contact model and customers engaging effectively in the significantly expanded digital channels such as webchat.
70. 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 which have just been submitted within days of the early closure period, we did not need to make use of the extended timescale which is a significant achievement. The Pension Team are ensuring that Local Government pensioners are paid across over 300 employers with some staff still having to be office based. The introduction of Teams external calling has allowed an improved approach to the contact centre. 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. HR Casework was paused for 'face to face' aspects during lockdown and plans are now in place to re-instate this sensitive work from the end of June utilising meeting rooms in line with normal practice although also offering the staff members the opportunity to meet 'virtually' as an alternative. 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.

71. 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, particularly Teams and external calling. Without this move the organisation would not be in such a strong position, particularly regarding working from home. Many County Council staff were working on home devices due to the swift move to home working and initial anticipation that this would be short lived, as it is now clear that for a significant number of staff home working will continue for a lengthy time period, IT are in the process of procuring and deploying appropriate IT kit to make this new operating model sustainable, ensuring staff wellbeing and maximising performance. 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 have worked 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.
72. 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.
73. 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 which moved in May for service reasons.

Human Resources – Our People

74. The implications of the COVID-19 situation continue to be felt for our people and our organisation, as they do the wider community. We remain mindful of both the length and depth of this crisis, particularly now that the Government have launched their recovery strategy and the timelines are longer term and contingent on factors largely outside of our or our people's control. That said it is worthy of note that our staff continue to demonstrate the best of themselves in these difficult times.

75. Well-being (physical and emotional) continues to be a feature of our HR activity with improved access and provision now available on the front pages of our intranet, including signposting to other services. All the content available to our staff has been assured by colleagues in Public Health so that we can be confident we are providing relevant and appropriate support to our staff. In addition, we are now specifically looking at further support that may be required, particularly to front-line staff, who have sadly had greater exposure to the loss of life than they would normally do. It was agreed by CMT that internal support mechanisms already available within AHC and CSD could be extended to other impacted Departments with some limited investment in additional training and resource required. Demand for these support services will be kept under review. Furthermore, our Recovery programme has a designated workstream for People and Organisational Health and Effectiveness, explicitly including 'wellbeing' which is being led by our AD HR+WFD with the support of PH. Through this workstream more detailed proposals will be established to support our people as they emerge. HR Business Partners continue to work closely with Directors and service managers to ensure emerging people issues are appropriately considered and addressed. This involves continued close working with our HR Policy team to enable timely advice and policy creation or adaptation as is necessary. As a result of this relationship we have been able to progress work quickly to support the re-commencement of HR casework.
76. As previously noted, Trade Union relationships continue to be key to our HR activities. More regular meetings are on-going during this crisis are going well and enabling a range of issues to be discussed and resolved meaningfully and at pace.

Communications and community engagement

77. Communication and engagement are recognised as critical tools to support the ongoing work throughout the *response, stabilisation, and recovery* phases. Effective public engagement to build trust is also crucial to the success of the County Council's Local Outbreak Strategy. Accordingly, the Authority continues to deliver a comprehensive and targeted communications and engagement strategy across external and internal audiences, which ensures the delivery of proactive, planned and consistent information, and in support of the LRF partnership.
- **Social media** campaigns remain a highly effective element of the County Council's communications approach. They continue to be well-received and enable the Authority to successfully deliver timely key information - reaching and engaging with audiences directly, as well as providing an effective platform for dialogue and resident engagement.
 - The dedicated Covid-19 **webpages** created and published on the County Council's website at the start of the pandemic remain an essential portal, attracting a high number of hits to www.hants.gov.uk. Content and layout are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving nature of the pandemic, and the County Council's ongoing recovery activity and local outbreak planning measures – as well as to optimise access to the most in-demand pages. Since

their launch, the Covid-19 webpages have received a total of almost **88,000 views** (as at 1 July) – including **17,800 views** of the *Welfare support* webpage. Now the most visited section on the site, the pages to book a visit to a Hampshire Household Waste Recycling Centre have received **454,000 views** since June alone. Almost three quarters of all visitors to the overall Covid-19 webpages stay on the site to view the service updates or visit other pages on hants.gov.uk.

- As lockdown restrictions increasingly ease, and the County Council's services adapt and respond accordingly, information continues to be proactively communicated to residents and stakeholders **via regular press releases, media interview opportunities and news media liaison**, alongside effective management of, and response to, heightened reactive media contact. Take-up of key messaging across all media (newspapers, online publications, radio and TV) remains consistently high, with a 93% positive/neutral profile achieved from over 600 items of news coverage secured since the start of the pandemic.
- Covid-19 tailored **e-briefings** remain well received by Hampshire MPs, Hampshire County Councillors and district councils' Chief Executives. These briefings are circulated three times a week, and shared internally, as well as with the County Council's key partners, and all town and parish councils, via the Hampshire Association of Local Councils, who also receive Covid-19 related updates via our regular e-bulletin for local councils. This channel is a key tool to help the County Council maintain public trust and confidence in how the emergency continues to be managed. It also provides ongoing reassurance and demonstrates its community leadership role.
- The County Council is proactively engaging residents to gain **insight and evidence** to inform communication messages, campaigns and recovery planning. For example, working with the University of Winchester and Hampshire's VCS (via Community First), the County Council ran a survey to understand how Covid-19 is impacting volunteering, how residents who have stopped volunteering may be supported back into voluntary service, and how volunteer capacity might be sustained over the medium-longer term. The survey, which closed on 26 June, received 1001 responses and the findings are due to be presented to the Corporate Recovery Group on 16 July. Initial findings will be built upon through in-depth interviews undertaken by the University as part of a longitudinal study.
- Recovery planning will also be informed by an early indicator dashboard bespoke to Hampshire, designed to highlight areas of risk. Work is underway to identify key metrics, which will complement those used at LRF level.
- Importance is placed on all forms of direct **internal communication** to County Council staff via corporate channels, to provide critical messaging; operational guidance and updates; supporting employee cohesion and wellbeing; and countering the potentially isolating implications of ongoing remote working.
- A staff survey ran between 1-16 June to understand the impact of Covid-19 on staff wellbeing, ways of working and attitudes towards any potential return to

working in an office environment. Take-up of the survey was high, with over 7,000 responses (57% of the workforce) – providing valuable insight into how staff are adapting to new ways of working. Key findings include: 66% of staff really enjoying or enjoying working from home, and around 80% of staff reporting that they are as effective or more effective, than in the office. The results have been considered by the Corporate Management Team, Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group, Corporate Office Accommodation Board as well as individual departments to ensure findings help to shape the County Council's future working plans.

Recovery

78. 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. In the case of this exceptional crisis, while we know that the response phase almost certainly has many weeks if not months still to run, particularly if there is a second peak of the infection later in the year. The scale of the immediate impact on the economy is becoming clearer, with the quarter one output figures confirming a sharp fall in the economy at the end of March, which continued through April. Early indications suggest some levelling off during May, and there are early signs of positive indications for the housing market and parts of the industrial economy following the initial easing of lockdown restrictions in May. However, the long-term position of employment may see significant deterioration as the Government Furlough scheme comes to an end later this year. The damage that high unemployment levels will cause to the wider economy, as well as the finances of the Government and the County Council are significant risks to the overall Recovery.
79. The LRF recovery processes continue 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 continues to be 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 includes the two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) that cover the county of Hampshire.
80. The Recovery work continues to aim to 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 will help Recovery 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.
81. The Recovery process is expected to take place over an extended period, and the pace will be dictated to a large extent by the need to balance risk and progress against managing and containing covid-19 infection rates and spread. It is expected that the local outbreak control mechanisms now being developed in Hampshire will help to support and manage this process locally,

whilst it is also acknowledged that the levers of recovery, such as fiscal policy, are largely operated at the national level.

Conclusion

82. This is the latest in what will be a necessarily detailed series of reports 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.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes/no
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes/no
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes/no
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes/no

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:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-ImpactAssessments.aspx?web=1>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- (a) *why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- (b) *will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*