

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: 2 JULY 2020

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND NEXT STEPS

Report of: Joint Chief Executive

Cabinet Member: Leader of the Council

I PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Council’s work to support the district during the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and also provides the Council’s emerging recovery plan to support the district in the coming months.
- 1.2 This report only represents an initial, high level assessment of the current position. It is a ‘holding’ report. The situation is still live, the pandemic is still ongoing (albeit apparently decreasing in intensity), and more work is required to give a more informed assessment of the implications for the Council. Furthermore, informed reports particularly on the financial implications and the Recovery Plan will be prepared for consideration in due course.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes and endorses the council’s response to the outbreak of coronavirus including executive decisions taken.
- 2.2 That the outline Hart COVID 19 Recovery Plan is agreed but recognising that this is a document that will evolve and be updated as required in the light of emerging information and local circumstances.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The global pandemic of coronavirus has resulted in an unprecedented challenge to both the Council and the community that it serves. All public services have been placed under considerable stress, not least of which was to seek at no notice to continue to operate in a ‘lockdown’ scenario with staff displaced and working from home. The Council however, responded by maintaining essential Council services, providing support to local businesses, supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and delivering national funding packages.
- 3.2 The Council is a Category One responder under the Civil Contingencies Act and is therefore required to initiate and take action as necessary to respond to any emergency. The Council is also part of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which brings together partners and national advisors if required to support response and recovery. There are two distinct but overlapping phases in emergency management.
 - **Response Phase** – Encompasses the actions taken to deal with the immediate effects of the pandemic. At this point rapid implementation of arrangements for

collaboration, coordination and communication are vital. Response encompasses the effort to deal with the direct effects of the emergency itself and the indirect effects.

- **Recovery Phase** – The recovery phase begins at the earliest opportunity following the onset of an emergency, running in tandem with the response to the emergency itself. It continues until the disruption has been rectified, demands on services have returned to normal levels and the needs of those directly and indirectly affected have been met. In sharp contrast to the response phase, the recovery phase may endure for months, years or even decades.

- 3.3 The Joint Chief Executive’s preparations for COVID-19 began through internal management teams throughout January and February, including the testing of homeworking for all staff during February and early March. This early consideration of issues enabled significant preparation to be made to maintain Council services even when working remotely from the 23rd March 2020.
- 3.4 On Friday, 20th March, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum formally declared coronavirus a major incident. On the following Sunday, after the announcement by the Prime Minister of the need to stay home, as well as make provision for the care and support of the shielded or vulnerable by Councils, Hart District Council invoked its Emergency Plan, advising Group Leaders of this decision, via email. This was then communicated to staff and the public on Monday, 23rd March, with the Council Offices closing its doors to the public.

4 GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 Under the constitution, decision making in the event of a Civil Emergency is altered as outlined below:
- *“Duty to act and power to incur expenditure, so as to provide support to the emergency services in dealing with a civil emergency as defined by the Hampshire County Council (or other appropriate body) and the District’s Major Civil Emergency Plan or successor Plan and/or arrangements. Such power may be exercised by the Officer in charge of the Council response or other formal arrangements entered into between the Council and Hampshire County Council pursuant to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 or otherwise in accordance with the Emergency Plan.*
 - *“CSOs [contract standing orders] cannot be waived where the contract value is in excess of the relevant EU threshold, unless it can be demonstrated to be essential for reasons of responding to a civil emergency, business continuity incident or in recovery.”*
- 4.2 Whilst recognising the ability for the Joint Chief Executives to take emergency decisions, mechanisms were put in place to help ensure good engagement, communication and governance. These included establishing
- a weekly Group Leaders meeting from the 23rd March (moved from monthly)
 - a Group Leaders ‘chat’ via Teams from the 27th March
 - a fortnightly Cabinet meeting (moved from monthly)
 - a new way to respond effectively to all Councillor enquiries (2nd April)
- 4.3 To help keep Councillors informed, the engagement developed over time. Emails were sent to all Councillors on the 20th March (on social distancing), 23rd March (on local support hubs) and then on a daily basis, with a wide variety of issues covered from the 2nd April until the 4th June when by mutual agreement this was reduced to a

weekly update. The distribution list was broadened during April to include Parish and Town Councils, County Councillors and MP's, and more recently now also includes the Voluntary Community Co-ordinators across the district.

5 COVID-19 RESPONSE

5.1 The Council has had to fundamentally change the way in which it provides its services. The organisation was in essence split between 'Response' and 'Business Continuity'. Up to a third of the staff were reallocated to new roles, at any one time, as new obligations were placed on the Council. All of this occurred during a time when almost all staff were required to work at home, with only a very small number of staff required in the office on a rota basis to support front line response.

5.2 At the beginning of the emergency, the following strategic objectives were established.

5.3 Connect, Co-ordinate and Communicate

- Coordinate a holistic response across the Council to coronavirus.
- Support businesses and economy, to help their sustainability during this pandemic
- Respond to the changing expectations of the Government as it evolves through guidance, announcements and regulations
- Ensure the Council had resilient arrangements in place for the continuation of key priority services
- Ensure that arrangements were in place to receive and support those seeking help from the Council
- Ensure clarity of communication.

5.4 The response was split broadly into five separate areas;

- emergency response information management.
- Warning and informing
- supporting those who were shielded or vulnerable,
- business grants and support to our economy,
- hardship, homelessness and management of emergency discharge from hospital

Emergency Response Information Management

- During the emergency, there has been a plethora of information produced within the LRF, as well as through alternative sources such as the Office for National Statistic (ONS).
- The emergency response information management team was pulled together to help everyone to remain informed of key information that could help inform or shape decisions.

Warning and Informing

An important stage is to ensure residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders have access to key information during the crisis. Actions the Council implemented, included:

- A new section of the Council's website – the COVID-19 Information Hub,
- A leaflet sent to all households in Hart,
- Weekly business email,

- Social media – Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter,
- Daily updates to Members, Town & Parish Councils, and
- Internal weekly staff newsletter.

Supporting those who were shielded or vulnerable

The Council was advised on Sunday, 22nd March of a completely new area of work, to ensure that the ‘shielded’ or ‘vulnerable for another reason’ were able to access

- Food
- Prescriptions
- Support to prevent social isolation
- Other support (such as dog walking)

It was very clear from the outset, that there were advantages of working in collaboration with Hampshire County Council (HCC) who would be the recipient of data on those who were to be shielded, and who had obligations to many people across the county through their adult and child social care services.

Working alongside the HCC, other Districts and locally Hart Voluntary Action, the local response hub went ‘live’ in a matter of only a few working days after the announcement, with the HCC contact centre becoming operational at the beginning of April.

The team have worked hard to ensure the effectiveness of the systems locally and with our volunteer sector. Considerable work has gone into

- access to food supplies (recognising the paucity of food and restrictions on items that could be purchased at the beginning caused considerable challenges), with many generous donations from local supermarkets
- helping identify solutions to pharmacy and prescription collections (our staff and volunteers were being asked to wait hours to access prescriptions)
- COVID-19 Grants with Hart District Council providing funds to those community groups who were on the ‘front line’ of response

5.5 Hardship, Homelessness and Emergency Discharge from Hospital

- **Hardship Fund** – announced on the 27th March, this enables £150 to be discounted from all eligible persons (i.e. those who are in receipt of Council tax relief). All approximately 640 households eligible for this reduction have now been advised by letter and the reduction applied to their account.

Discretion was provided to local Councils to decide how best to apply any remaining funds within this hardship fund. Hart District Council took the decision to hold this funding for any person who found themselves without money and in need. The hardship fund has been managed within the Engagement and Support team and around £6k has been spent to support individuals in their daily lives. This has included the purchase of a fridge for an elderly resident, so she didn’t have to go to the shops daily and the purchase of a bicycle enabling another resident to get to work without using public transport.

- **Homelessness** – Ministry of Housing, local Government, and Communities (HCLG) required all Councils to bring inside any rough sleepers throughout lockdown. This has included those that faced hitting the streets during the pandemic and those who were not local to Hart. So far, the Council has housed

16 households in Bed & breakfast (B&B) since lockdown started. The team have worked exceptionally hard and all of those 16 households have now been assisted through into private rented sector accommodation, or other housing.

- **Emergency Discharge from Hospital** - there has been no mass discharge from local hospitals. However, the Council has worked with Hart Voluntary Action to support their “home from hospital” project, to make sure that those who have been discharged have a safe environment to return to.

5.6 Business Grants & Supporting the Economy

- **Business Grants** – Following an outline indication in the Budget on 11 March 2020, the Government announced the Small Business Grant Fund and Retail/Hospitality Grant Funds and provided initial guidance on how to run the scheme on 24th March 2020. Funding for this was provided to Hart District Council by 1st April 2020 and it was the Government’s expectation that the distribution of the grant would start immediately and be completed by 1 May 2020. The Council has, since then, distributed £12.76 million in grants to 970 small businesses (as at 23rd June 2020).

At the outset it must be acknowledged that the Council was not in any position at all to administer the distribution of the grant:

- The Business Grants scheme was predicated and necessitated the use of Business rates information to discharge this function. This is because businesses had to be on the ratings list as at 11 March 2020.
- The Council had outsourced Business Rates to Capita in 2008 (reprocured in 2015) and the Council held neither Business Rate data nor systems, resources or infrastructure to manage the Government’s Grant scheme.
- The timescales involved (one week) made it impractical to consider a meaningful procurement options exercise. The Council held no data on business rates, it held no information on the number of properties involved, or in what form (or format) it was held, and it had no way of extracting that data from Capita’s systems. In the middle of a ‘lock’ down’ pandemic it could not therefore, reasonably prepare a fully scoped and informed options assessment. Along with the other 5Cs partners the only practical and viable option was to turn to Capita to seek its support.
- The requirement to administer grants is not part of the existing Capita contract indeed, Capita’s Revenues systems were set up to receive payments, not to make bulk payments. This required the establishment of new processes from the outset, which added a level of complexity.
- The contract allowed for a limited resource, suitable for ‘business as usual’ and therefore the Council needed to work with Capita to enable further resources to be made available at a time when
 - Understandably, all other Council clients across the county with contracts with Capita were making the same request and
 - All Capita staff had similarly been dislocated to home working, which had subsequent impacts on telephony.
- It was recognised that, in the early weeks, Capita were not responsive to business contact. This was inevitable given the scale of properties and

workload involved. (10,000 within the 5Cs area) involved. Therefore, we increased management to include:

- Daily liaison between Authority leads and Client on progress.
 - Rapid turnaround by the Council on any decisions required to progress matters.
 - Close monitoring and twice weekly “all Council” coordination calls with key Capita representatives (at an operational and partnership level).
 - Chief Executive intervention with the Partnership Director and other senior stakeholders.
- However, the multitude (and often repeated) complaints coming direct from the businesses, from Councillors, Parish Councils and MP’s lead to a significant increase in workload for Hart District Council staff, who had no more ability to access the systems and ascertain progress on individual cases, than the individuals themselves. This was exacerbated decision taken by Capita (and supported by the Councils) to focus on processing grants, so businesses could receive funds, at the cost of responding to queries.
 - Notwithstanding this, Hart’s performance now is very much reflective of other councils’ performance and it has been carried out with appropriate due diligence, so the risk of fraud has been reduced. Across the 5Cs contract, £95.3M of grants have now been paid, to 7,627 businesses.
- **Small Business Discretionary Grants Fund.** The distribution of this ‘top-up’ grant (£707k) is being managed by the Council itself. It is aimed at those small and micro businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs that have suffered a significant drop of income due to COVID-19 restrictions and who were not eligible for any other Government grant. Around 177 applications have been received and account is also been taken of those businesses which applied, but were not successful, for the earlier Government grant. The aim is to distribute the grant to eligible businesses from the week beginning 29 June 2020.
 - **Supporting the Economy** – this has been undertaken in a variety of ways including:
 - Weekly business e-newsletters, plus website, and social media – Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter,
 - Signposting to other Government support, plus FAQs,
 - Support and advice for pubs, restaurants and other food suppliers to move to takeaway-only options safely,
 - Provision of information online regarding which businesses are open for business – helping businesses, residents and community groups,
 - Ensuring only those businesses who are allowed to be open are open, dealing with those businesses who needed to close, and providing daily updates for Govt,
 - Working with groups like the Job Centre on the implications for our residents, and the number of people claiming benefits.

6 STAFFING THE RESPONSE

- 6.1 Hart District Council, by comparison to nearby authorities, has a relatively small number of directly employed staff. So, in the face of new legal obligations and duties we have needed to, as a whole organisation, be exceptionally flexible in the way we apply our resources.
- 6.2 From Parking to Planning Policy, from Countryside to Commercialisation, our staff from across the council have been inspirational in their enthusiasm to take on these new roles, exceptionally willing to take on and accept change, and incredible in their commitment (and sheer dogged determination) to get the best possible outcomes for our residents.

7 EMERGENCY DECISIONS TAKEN

- 7.1 As outlined in 4.1 above, in the event of a civil emergency, the Joint Chief Executives may make decisions to support the emergency plan response. These have been recorded, since the invocation of the emergency plan, via an online log.
- 7.2 Details of the decisions taken under the emergency provisions within the constitution are:

Date	Decision
22 nd March 2020	Invocation of the Hart Emergency Plan (O)
23 rd March 2020	Establishment of structure to deliver COVID-19 response, allocation of resources across the organisation for this purpose (O).
23 rd March 2020	Establishment of a new cost code to allocate all COVID-19 related spend (O)
24 rd March 2020	Discussion start with Capita across the 5 Council's partnership to assess how the Government Small Business Grants, and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants proposals could be implemented (O)
24 th March 2020	Retention of Head of Community Services based on a negotiated agreement (with commensurate impact on the Head of Environment and Technical Services) – cost £15K
25 th March 2020	To establish a Hart Response Hub will require an IT platform. This could be done inhouse, but would require scarce resources – purchased a system at a cost of £1,000 (O)
27 th March 2020	Once £150 reduction is applied to eligible Council Taxpayers, all remaining funds in the hardship fund to be allocated for use by any resident who finds themselves in financial hardship. Until the £150 can be applied, no requests for Council Tax payment will be made of this group €
27 th March 2020	Additional resources required for communications, additional resources at additional cost brought in (website reformatted for COVID19) (O)

Date	Decision
30 th March 2020	The creation and distribution of a COVID 19 leaflet for all residents (O)
30 th March 2020	Two compartments in Elvetham Heath Nature Reserve closed due problems with visitors congregating at 'kissing' gates and also being unable to maintain reasonable social distancing (O)
3 rd April 2020	Agreement to match grant funding from HCC to Community/Voluntary Groups responding directly to the COVID pandemic – cost £5000 €
9 th April 2020	Agreed to establishment of Recovery in shadow, whilst response is ongoing (O)
28 th April 2020	Agreement to use of a survey to assess the impact of COVID on the community (O)
9 th May 2020	Commissioned consultants to help with the reallocation of road space for reopening of the high streets, current cost £11,000 €
25 th May 2020	Elvetham Heath Nature Reserve fully opened to the public (O)
1 st June 2020	Jointly commission consultants with Hampshire County Council to prepare a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – cost £20,000 to enable further bids for funding (E)
5 th June 2020	Additional resources required to enable effective Recovery, whilst providing continuity of business as usual services, as well as continued response. Cost £30,000 (E)
5 th June 2020	Commissioned contractors to install and manage traffic management measures in Fleet Road to facilitate social distancing for initial 6 weeks period cost £6k (O)

O = Operational Decisions – no further approval required as within operational terms and budget
E = Executive Decision – urgent decisions made in the absence of the Executive.

8 BUSINESS CONTINUITY

8.1 Under the Civil Contingencies Act, there is a requirement for Category I providers to aim to continue essential services during a civil emergency and we have sought to do so. Outlined below are the services and how they have been impacted:

Service	Impact (increase or decrease in demand)	Any change in service delivery	Restoration of service delivery if known
Benefits	Increase	No	Not applicable
Bottle Banks	Decrease	Yes, closed for around 6 weeks	Now open
Building Control	Decrease	Service remains fully functional and only completion site visits temporarily stopped during total lock down.	No applicated (all site visits resumed)
Business Support Unit	Same	No, albeit no staff on site	Not applicable
Car Parks	Decrease	Car park charging ceased in March	Charges are considered as part of a separate paper to Cabinet.
Communications	Increase	Temporary additional resources added	Not applicable
Committee Services	Decrease	Initially all Council Meetings were cancelled.	Normal meetings of the Council and Committees have now been reinstated but are operating under new Government virtual Council meeting rules.
Council Tax	Increase	No	Not applicable
Countryside	Increase	Short term closure of the Elvetham Nature Reserve Enclosure	All SANGS, Country parks and Heaths etc open (including Elvetham Heath Nature Reserve. are now open
Disabled Facilities Grants	Same	Yes. Unable to access inside properties – all non-emergency work ceased	Imminent restoration of service subject to

Service	Impact (increase or decrease in demand)	Any change in service delivery	Restoration of service delivery if known
			risk assessment for visits to homes
Elections	Decrease	Coronavirus Act prevents elections until next year	Subject to amendments of the legislation, no elections until May 2021
Environmental Protection	Increase	No. Fully functional throughout - larger number of calls/ complaints	Not applicable
Facilities Management	Increase	Need to ensure the building is safe for essential visits / delivering the virtual Council meetings	Not applicable
Food inspections	Decrease	Food inspections suspended until July – phone contact instead	May be reintroduced in July subject to risk assessment
Litter Enforcement	Decrease	Enforcement ceased 23 rd March	Enforcement to recommence at the beginning of July
Leisure Centres	Loss	Closed since March 2020 as a result of Government 'lockdown'	Unknown
Garden Waste	Same	Garden Waste services suspended to protect residual waste collections	Service restored from the 15 th June 2020
Homelessness	Increase	Government expectations increased	Not applicable
On street parking enforcement	Decrease	Carried out under a management agreement with Hampshire County Council who requested a reduction	On site visits now being carried out but enforcement not yet restored
Planning (Development Management)	Similar	Planning applications still administered. However, suspended site visits, suspended site notices,	Some site visits reintroduced June subject to risk assessment.

Service	Impact (increase or decrease in demand)	Any change in service delivery	Restoration of service delivery if known
		alternative arrangements for Planning Committee	The Government has introduced new statutory planning application publicity arrangements.
Planning Enforcement	Increase	Site visits suspended unless cases of emergency	Not applicable
Planning Policy & Economic Development	Increase	Local Plan adopted April Increase workload for Business Employment Skills Team	Not applicable

8.2 In the meantime, with the exception of the Reception area, the Council remains essentially closed to the public other than for access to essential welfare services such as homelessness and benefits. All payments can be made online and staff can still operate remotely and are accessible. The building itself is being adapted for safe occupation but it is not the immediate intention to bring staff back into the Offices until later this summer and even then, numbers will be carefully controlled to ensure safe working practices including social distancing. All tenants who occupied the premises are being kept informed.

9 URGENT BUSINESS CONTINUITY DECISIONS TAKEN

- 9.1 Naturally, with the requirement for social distancing, the ability to continue with normal democratic decision making has taken a sidestep.
- 9.2 The constitution makes provision for urgent decisions

Date	Decision
13 th March	Contract signed to install Virtual Private Network (VPN) to enable Council systems to be access from home
17 th March	Purchase of new laptops and mobile phones to enable home working.
18 th March 2020	Cessation of car parking charges and on-street parking charge enforcement
18 th March	Commission the purchase of Modern.gov Committee services software
23 rd March 2020	Garden Waste and Bulky Waste Collection Services suspended
22 nd April 2020	Decision to commission White Young Green (and separate legal advice) to investigate waste client team implications arising from BDBC concerns. Cost £15,000

Date	Decision
22 nd May 2020	Decision to go 'live' with Discretionary Grants Scheme on 26 th May 2020.

10 MOVING INTO RECOVERY

- 10.1 As part of established emergency planning protocols, the LRF has established a recovery group to oversee this complex and long running process. 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. It is a complex social and developmental process rather than just a remedial process. The broad, interlinked categories of impact that individuals and communities will need to recover from include humanitarian (including health); economic; environment and infrastructure.
- 10.2 Although the LRF recovery plan will provide a framework, it is important that a local recovery plan is established. The way recovery processes are undertaken is critical to their success. Recovery is best achieved when the plan is created with the affected community and this is somewhat easier to achieve in response to a physical emergency such as flooding as there are physical assets to repair. Recovery from a global pandemic has international, national and local impacts and as such the plan will change over time with the pace of recovery being particularly linked to national announcements. On 11th May, the Government published its recovery plan which also would have to respond to any second wave of infection, when recovery may pause and the response phase resume.
- 10.3 Therefore, the local recovery plan must be evidence based but intuitive and responsive to changing situations. The pandemic and the ongoing effects have potential to fundamentally change how people live and work; activities or projects the Council or communities intended to undertake may now not be viable or no longer relevant.
- 10.4 The scope of the proposed Hart Recovery Plan requires further development, but an initial draft plan is included as **Appendix I**
- 10.5 As engaging with the community is vital to this approach, one of our first steps has been to establish a ‘sounding board’ with key representation from the NHS, Business, the Voluntary Sector, Citizens Advice, Parish and Town Councils and Volunteers who have been on the forefront of the COVID response.
- 10.6 Recovery activity is currently being carried out ‘in shadow’ whilst the Council remains in the response phase (albeit it is running parallel to that work). In addition, with the gradual lifting of lockdown, public and political expectations regarding a return to ‘business as usual’ service delivery means that resource availability for response, recovery and returning to normal services is having a major impact on the Councils ability to deliver against this ‘perfect storm’ of expectation.
- 10.7 As part of the recovery process, the Council is leading on a number of interlinked projects to support the High Streets, provide a safe environment for people to use the High Streets, and support the local economy. This involved close collaboration with HCC, the M3 Local Enterprise Board (LEP), the Town/Parish Councils, and Fleet BID. On 5th June, two bids for funding were submitted, one to the LEP and the other via HCC to Department for Transport (DfT). This would support a 3-stage project in Fleet Road to pedestrianise it for a temporary period during the

current crisis and enhance the cycle route from the town centre, to the railway station. The Council is also working with Town and Parish Councils in the other key retail areas.

- 10.8 Linked with this High Streets project, the Council is also looking at funding opportunities to promote walking and cycling across the District and Safe Routes to Schools/School Streets. The Government has advised to avoid public transport if possible (and leave them available for key workers) and at the same time promote active lifestyles through walking and cycling. In order to progress bids for funding for these projects, the Council is working to jointly commission with Hampshire County Council a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Hart District Council will need to fund 50% of the cost of this, probably around £20,000, agreed in principle, via emergency decision on the 1st June.

11 FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 11.1 This will be subject to a separate paper for Cabinet's consideration in August.

12 LEGAL AND EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 12.1 The Council is a Category One responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and is therefore required to initiate and take action as necessary to respond to any emergency. The Council is also part of the LRF which brings together partners and national advisors if required to support response and recovery in relation to major emergencies which require cross agency cooperation.
- 12.2 In addition, the Council has wide ranging authority under the 'general competence' provision of the Localism Act 2011 which enables it to take actions to the benefit of its area which are commonly available to other private sector bodies.
- 12.3 During the pandemic outbreak (which it must be stressed has not yet passed), new primary and secondary legislation was passed by Central Government in order to amend established ways living and working that required social distancing, home working, school closures, protection of key workers and the vulnerable. This framework enabled Councils to assist to combat the economic and health effects of the outbreak, through additional public protection enforcement and social care responsibilities.
- 12.4 For the purposes of equalities, one of the main principles adopted during the outbreak was to provide services for as long as possible at usual service levels. However, restrictions on social distancing did mean that some services, had to be reduced or rescheduled.
- 12.5 However, other services continued with amended ways of working, for example the Housing and Planning services continued.
- 12.6 Other services to support our most vulnerable and isolated residents were increased. As part of the Local Response Centre, colleagues supported shielded residents with shopping and/or collection of prescriptions.

I3 CONSULTATION

- 13.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a paper on the Councils response to Covid and Next Steps on Tuesday 16th June
- 13.2 Members discussed the speed and effectiveness of response by Hart District Council and decisions made, in particular in relation to Business Grants. Particular issues associated with the distribution of the Grant were discussed including the lack of any business rate infrastructure and flexibility in service delivery following the outsourcing of the business rate function, the need to use the current service provider to distribute the Grant, the lack of communication from the supplier, and the frustration that this all caused to businesses who could not make contact with the supplier. These are dealt with in more detail in Section 5.8 above.
- 13.3 Members also discussed section 5.6 of the report and Hart's quick response to emergency discharge from hospitals. Members asked if we can improve our responses if there is a second peak and it was confirmed that a staff survey has been carried out regarding business continuity.
- 13.4 Members discussed the financial impact of the pandemic on the service delivery and how staff resources had been dispersed across the Council
- 13.5 It was noted that Hart will come out of the response phase and into recovery phase as guided by the LRF. Hart's recovery will continue in shadow until a decision is made when to move fully into the recovery phase.

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Appendix I - Hart District Council COVID-19 Recovery Plan

DRAFT



Hart District Council COVID-19 Recovery Plan Introduction

Recovery is a complex and long running process that will involve many agencies and participants. It can be long lasting and may be more costly in terms of resources; it is therefore essential for the process to be based on well thought out and tested structures and procedures for it to work in an efficient and orderly manner.

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.

It is a complex social and developmental process rather than just a remedial process. The broad, interlinked categories of impact that individuals and communities will need to recover from include:

- Humanitarian (including. Health);
- Economic;
- Environment and Infrastructure;

The way recovery processes are undertaken is critical to their success. Recovery is best achieved when the affected community can exercise a high degree of self-determination.

The aim of the plan is to:

Provide an integrated management structure for recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objectives of the plan are:

- To meet the statutory requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- To implement and manage an effective multi-agency recovery process.
- To ensure a coordinated and integrated recovery process.
- To identify representation to populate the recovery structure.
- To identify partners in the recovery process.
- To ensure effective partnership working between the relevant organisations and agencies.
- To address the short, medium and long-term requirements of those affected.

Outline of the Incident Response

Response Phase – Encompasses the actions taken to deal with the immediate effects of the pandemic. Rapid implementation of arrangements for collaboration, coordination and communication are vital. Response encompasses the effort to deal with the direct effects of the emergency itself and the indirect effects.

The Gold (Strategic), Silver (Tactical) and Bronze (Operational) tiered command structure used by Category One responders is nationally recognised and accepted. The terms Gold, Silver and Bronze are used to describe *individual* agency levels of command. The terms Strategic, Tactical and Operational are used when describing multi-agency command levels. In this response the Local Resilience Forum with representation from Category 1 responders across Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton have come together under a holistic management structure, led by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

Recovery Phase – The recovery phase begins at the earliest opportunity following the onset of an emergency, running in tandem with the response to the emergency itself. It continues until the disruption has been rectified, demands on services have returned to normal levels and the needs of those directly and indirectly affected have been met. In sharp contrast to the response phase, the recovery phase may endure for months, years or even decades.

The HIOW LRF Community Recovery Plan provides a recovery framework and guidance. The Hart District Council COVID-19 Recovery Plan is aligned to this framework.

Understanding Recovery

The purpose of providing recovery support is to assist the affected community towards management of its own recovery. It is recognised that where a community experiences a significant emergency, there is a need to supplement the personal, family and community structures which have been disrupted. Recovery should be done “with” the community not “to” the community.

The Principles of recovering from emergencies are:

- Recovery is an **enabling and supportive process**, which allows individuals, families and communities to attain a proper level of functioning through the provision of information, specialist services and resources.
- Effective recovery requires the establishment of **planning and management** arrangements, which are accepted and understood by recovery agencies, the community and armed forces (if deployed).
- Recovery management arrangements are most effective when they recognise the **complex, dynamic and protracted** nature of recovery processes and the changing needs of affected individuals, families and groups within the community over time.

- The management of recovery is best approached from a **community development** perspective. It is most effective when conducted at the local level with the active participation of the affected community and a strong reliance on local capacities and expertise. Recovery is not just a matter for the statutory agencies - the private sector, the voluntary sector and the wider community will play a crucial role.
- Recovery management is most effective when agencies involved in **human welfare** have a major role in all levels of decision-making which may influence the well-being and recovery of the affected community.
- Recovery is best achieved where the recovery process begins from the **moment the emergency begins**.
- Recovery is most effective where recovery management arrangements provide a **comprehensive and integrated framework** for managing all potential emergencies and where assistance measures are provided in a timely, fair and equitable manner and are sufficiently flexible to respond to a diversity of community needs.

The recovery process comprises the following overlapping activities:

- **Consequence management** – Taking steps to prevent the escalation of the impacts of an emergency (e.g. restoring essential services following a disruption or securing evacuated premises).
- **Restoring** the well-being of individuals, communities and the infrastructure which supports them – Emergencies can have enduring impacts and timely action will be needed to identify those impacts coupled with longer term engagement to ensure that they are adequately addressed.
- **Exploiting** opportunities afforded by emergencies – Establishing what happened, identifying where improvements could be made, and applying lessons learned. Taking steps to adapt systems, services and infrastructure affected by emergencies to meet future needs.

In order to develop Recovery capability, it is essential that roles and responsibilities have been identified and that the people involved have the necessary capacity to deliver. Starting recovery during the response phase does mean staff capacity is depleted as the same staff will in many cases, be involved in response.

Once the response phase is completed and recovery has begun in earnest, staff capacity may still remain limited with public expectations regarding a 'return to normal' of Council services, reducing capacity for recovery.

As recovery is coordinated via the Hampshire Isle of Wight LRF there are opportunities to gain information, expertise and share knowledge across the county.

Impacts of an Emergency

Emergencies affect communities in a wide variety of ways. To understand what recovery comprises, one first needs to map out who is affected and how emergencies affect them.

One of the first stages in recovery will be the creation of a community impact assessment. It is likely to develop over time from a rough and ready assessment, probably covering the more immediate needs of people, to a more refined assessment of longer-term humanitarian needs and economic development.

To understand how emergencies can affect individuals and their communities – and thus the scope of the recovery effort, it is important to understand how emergencies impact upon the environment individuals live and work in. There are some standard interlinked broad categories of impact from which individuals and communities will need to recover:

Humanitarian Assistance (including health and social impacts)	Physical impacts (including individuals' health, housing, financial needs) Psychological impacts Deaths
Economic	Economic and business recovery; education and skills
Environmental and Infrastructure	Disruption to daily life (e.g. educational establishments, welfare services, transport system, food distribution etc) Disruption to utilities/ essential services

Whether, and, at what level action needs to be taken, will depend on the nature, scale and severity of the emergency itself and the impact it has had on the community it serves.

Elected Members/ Parish Councils /Community and Voluntary Groups can play a critical role in the impact assessment process, identifying problems and vulnerabilities in their community that may require priority attention and feeding them back to the relevant recovery group. They also have an important role in disseminating consistent credible information and advice back to the community, maintaining community cohesion and providing public reassurance.

It is vital that following the impact assessment process (which will be an iterative process occurring throughout the recovery phase), any resulting actions are accurately captured, and progress monitored.

COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Strategy

Strategic Aims

The following strategic aim has been proposed to guide recovery in Hart:

Working with the Hampshire Local Resilience Forum, to restore to the “New Normal” the social, economic and political well-being of the communities of Hart and operation of the District Council services.

Objectives

The following objectives have been created based on the framework set out by the Local Resilience Forum Recovery Plan:

1. Agree community and operational visions for the “New Normal”.
2. Help the communities, the voluntary sector and businesses of Hart to recover and move forward as speedily as possible through an effective, collaborative, and well-communicated multi-agency response led by the Council.
3. Develop and maintain an impact assessment for the COVID-19 pandemic in Hart
4. Develop a concise, balanced, and affordable (whatever that means now) recovery action plan.
5. Help those traumatised by their experience of the impact of COVID-19 on themselves, their families and their loved ones to address their trauma (and grieve their loss).
6. Celebrate and commemorate the contributions made to support our communities through the incident and give the public opportunities to express their appreciation.
7. Ensure we build on the good work in response, to retain good engagement with key stakeholders including other public sector organisations, voluntary sector, business sector and Parish and Town Councils.
8. Use recovery as an opportunity to rethink the way the Council provides its service and support our staff in the change management process.
9. Cherish and implement the learning from the incident, including capturing best practice and reflect on future priorities in the light of collective experience.

Targets

As part of the recovery strategy, targets and milestones for the recovery will be established and agreed. The community should be involved in establishing these targets. These targets provide a means of measuring progress with the recovery process and may assist in deciding when specific recovery activities can be scaled down.

The following targets/milestones* are being developed (with SMART proxy indicators to be identified):

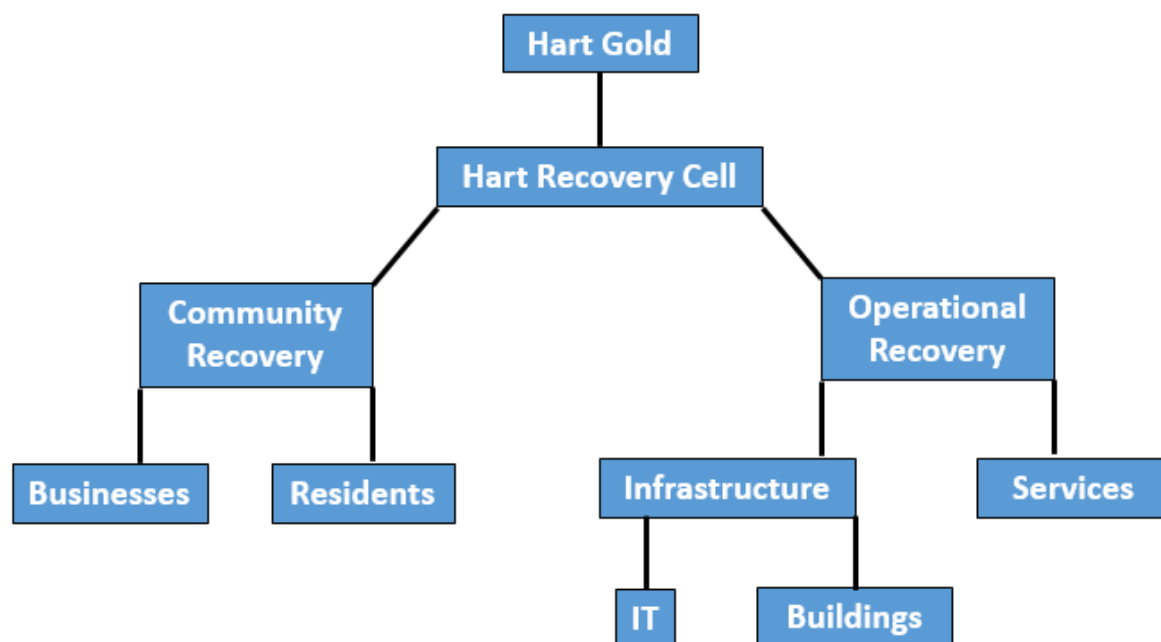
1. Agree membership of Hart Recovery Group and subgroups
2. Agree 'new normal' for service provision
3. Restoration of 'new normal' service provision
4. Post-incident review of response - what went well, could be improved, lessons learnt
5. Steps to address staff exhaustion and leave entitlement, restoring training etc.
6. Planning and preparation for resurgence of COVID-19
7. Identify opportunities to build in economic & social resilience
8. Re-building economic activity and business functionality - support to entrepreneurs
9. Restoration of democratic processes.

Representation on Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Working Groups

The LRF Recovery Coordinating Group will have the following functional Working Groups. To ensure good engagement and the sharing of knowledge and expertise it is recommended that the following staff will be Hart DC's representatives on these groups:

1. LRF Recovery Coordinating Group – Joint Chief Executive (Patricia Hughes)
2. Communications - Communications Manager
3. Finance and Resources - Head of Corporate Services (SI51)
4. Environment and Infrastructure, including, Logistics --Head of Environment and Technical Services
5. Business and Economic – Head of Place
6. Health and Welfare including Social Care, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing, Education and Children's Social Care, Voluntary and Community engagement and development - Head of Community

Hart Group Structure



Hart Recovery Cell - To coordinate and oversee the restoration of the wider community and all Council functions to a 'new normal' and to ensure Hart's recovery is coordinated with the LRF's recovery response as required by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. To look for and encourage opportunities to build back better and achieve wider reach benefits.

Operational Recovery - To ensure that the delivery of services, and the infrastructures and finance that supports this is restored as quickly and efficiently as reasonably possible, and where feasible to identify opportunities that have arisen from the incident to build back better. To consider and monitor the health and wellbeing of Hart staff and recommend measures to address any issues identified.

Community Recovery - to identify the essential groups who most require support or who, if supported, would facilitate wider community recovery. To look for opportunities for encouraging future resilience in the community and to determine the most effective and efficient means for achieving both recovery and resilience.

Services - To prioritise and develop timelines and strategies for the restoration of all Council services to the agreed New Normal (if applicable) and to aid the restoration of these services. To support the Operational Recovery where needed.

Infrastructure - To develop strategies to address likely issues and constraints that could affect Council infrastructure and in turn constrain the restoration of Council services to the New Normal. To support the Operational Recovery where needed.

Residents - To determine strategies in collaboration with key partners to support those residents in Hart who are adversely affected and/or those key groups who if supported could aid wider community rehabilitation. To support the Community Recovery where needed.

Businesses - To determine strategies in collaboration with key partners to support effective, efficient and timely recovery of businesses within Hart. To support the Community Recovery where needed.