

**Report of Chief Executive**

**Report to Full Council**

**Date: 15 July 2020**

**Subject:** Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		
Appendix number:		

**Summary**

This report provides an overview of the Council’s approach to responding to, and recovering from, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic over the past three months. It is accompanied by the Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan that was discussed at June’s Executive Board (Appendix A), which forms part of the Executive Board minutes that will be covered at the same meeting.

**1. Main issues**

- Coronavirus has been the most significant challenge that this country and others have faced since the Second World War. The number of lives lost is staggering and the impact on day to day life is unprecedented, with the impact most significant on those already worse off. The amount of new and different challenges seen, from PPE to food parcels, outbreaks and no physical meetings, has challenged everyone.
- The immediate health implications have been obvious, with the numbers of cases and deaths, but also we know there has been a less obvious impact on other health conditions and especially mental health and wellbeing. We don’t yet fully understand how different groups have been impacted, but the early indications of a disproportionate

impact on people from BAME communities and people living in areas of deprivation are a major concern and our efforts have been focused on providing support and advice to these communities.

- We know that the economic impact is unprecedented and there have also been significant social impacts such as an increase in levels of domestic violence, with the Leeds Domestic Violence Service rapidly adapting to ensure that services could be delivered with social distancing measures in place. Another major concern is that the virus will widen inequalities and this will dominate our planning going forward. Children and young people have had to adapt to huge disruption to their routines and for many, the impact of missing out on physically attending school and interacting with peers has had taken a significant toll on their development and wellbeing.
- We have all learned a whole new language of social distancing, shielding, key workers, Zoom calls and bubbles to name a few. It has shown us the worst and the best, as we have seen human tragedy alongside an incredible response from the public, the council and our partners including the NHS. The volunteering effort in the city has been humbling and inspiring, as has the way we have maintained essential services and shown our appreciation through clapping for carers. Our strong public health function, with well-established partnerships between health, the council and statutory partners, the full range of community partners, the media and our business partners, have enabled us to respond in such a thorough and proactive way.
- Our regular Executive Board Reports, since March, have documented in detail the way that the city has responded to these incredible challenges: from the early focus on contact tracing every case, to the pressure on the hospital, to the implications for care homes, schools, refuse and so many of our services.
- The swift and comprehensive approach to entering lockdown was excellent, with council staff and partners working together to ensure that essential services, especially those for the vulnerable, still operated. Schools adapted to ensure that vulnerable children and key worker children could continue to attend, while other pupils were supported through remote learning; care workers found ways to deliver services with social distancing; the refuse service maintained collections throughout lockdown, with waste levels higher than ever; new systems were established business grants to be paid; sports and museum activities quickly adapted to deliver online content; and the contact centre set up a new coronavirus hotline whilst delivering regular services and taking hundreds of calls, many of which were from very distressed members of the public and without clear answers available. Lockdown changed the way the city operates, with footfall a fraction of normal, and only key workers travelling as everyone who could worked from home.
- Adapting our services to the way people had to live their lives during this period was a real test, with everyone getting used to a new normal. For those shielding, this was even harder and people needed more support from neighbours or the council. 19,300 shielded

individuals have registered with the Council for support, and 4000 food parcels are being distributed every week with the support of 5000 volunteers.

- For the organisation, the way we work has fundamentally changed, with the focus on delivering safe essential services, the reliance on PPE, many services closed, and everyone who was able to working from home. With so much income lost and so many additional costs, our financial position is now a major concern that could involve huge cuts to services that would undermine our ability to lead the city's economic and social recovery.
- As we planned for lifting lockdown, our focus was on the continued safety of the public and workers, ensuring that we had safe workplaces, travel, safe education and safe public spaces. Over 4,100 people responded to a consultation on emergency measures to support safe active travel, contributing 20,000 ideas and suggestions. As a result of the consultation, 100km of pop-up segregated cycle lanes have been planned along key arterial routes, beginning with the A65 Kirkstall Road, and 500 additional cycle parking spaces are planned across the city to support residents to continue to cycle as we move out of lockdown.
- As non-essential retail reopened and footfall increased in the city and district centres, 210 information boards and banners were installed to reinforce social distancing messages, and 1000 queue marker stickers were issued free of charge to city centre businesses to support queue management and social distancing. Three hand sanitising stations in the city centre helped residents to practice good hygiene when out and about, and in the district centres barriers were installed to widen pavements along key routes. This safety first approach has continued as lockdown has been eased, with investment and effort to work with partners to enable a safe return to a new normal and a focus on local outbreak planning to be preventative and proactive to help control the virus and enable the economy to return in part.
- Regular updates to councillors and MPs have demonstrated the extent of national guidance issued to deal with this scenario, often daily to maintain pace with developments. These have provided so many examples of great work being done and demonstrated the activity levels of things like call volumes, food parcels, business grants and waste dealt with. Some key achievements of the past three months are highlighted below.

#### April 2020

- Social media campaigns were launched to support Stay At Home messaging and let people know how to access help, e.g. for those facing domestic violence.
- A drive-through coronavirus testing site and a temporary mortuary were rapidly established.
- Letters were sent to 12,500 informal carers to ensure they know how to ask for support.
- More than 8000 council staff began regularly working from home, including the council contact centre. Extensive liaison with trade unions continued.

- Training and redeploying of staff took place to keep key services running and to support voluntary schemes.
- 8000 volunteers were registered to support the most vulnerable residents with essential tasks like food shopping, supported by 'volunteer hubs' hosted by local community organisations in every ward.
- Online learning content for museums and galleries, arts and libraries services and Active Leeds was increased and promoted.
- Rapid redesigning of processes e.g. webform for grants, invoice processing and mail delivery took place to enable essential services to be provided.

#### May 2020

- A new welfare calls service, 'Are U OK?' was launched, providing welfare check-in calls to those that request it through the COVID-19 helpline.
- Nearly 41m items of PPE were distributed to health and care settings in May, including 40.5m aprons, 200,750 pairs of gloves, 129,555 face masks, 5274 face shields and 1336 goggles.
- An additional 1,472 packages of support were provided to people, either in their own homes or in a care home.
- 330,000 leaflets were posted to households with information about accessing support, translated into 12 community languages.
- Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide) was down 52% across the city compared to the year before.
- 133 exercise videos were added to the Active Leeds YouTube channel, gathering 17,000 views. 21,746 people visited the new Active Leeds Healthy at Home website.
- Household Waste Recycling Centres reopened using a booking system.
- 515 people were supported into work and apprenticeships during April and May 2020.

#### June 2020

- 231,286 visits were made to the dedicated webpage at [www.leeds.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/coronavirus)
- 9791 adults with care plans were being supported by Adult Social Care.
- More than £142.2m in grants were paid to over 11,500 businesses.
- 36,000+ food parcels were delivered since the beginning of lockdown.
- 34,390 free school meals were provided to children across Leeds every week.
- 4.2 million black and green bins were collected since lockdown began, totalling 54,000 tonnes. In the first week in June 7,500 tonnes of household waste was collected, compared to 4,500 tonnes in the same week last year. This is the largest quantity of household waste ever collected in Leeds in one week by a considerable margin. 383,000 brown bins were emptied in the first three weeks since the service resumed, totalling 6,200 tonnes of garden waste. 60% more glass was collected and recycled than the previous year.
- 116,000 residents received weekly coronavirus news bulletins from the Council.

- The Active Leeds app was downloaded 20,000 times, an increase of 43% during June alone. Over 1000 people participated in the first two days of live streaming of fitness classes through the app.
- Looking ahead, we know that this new normal will last for some considerable time, until there is a vaccine available, and we know that winter could bring further challenges.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The Best Council Plan agreed by Full Council in February 2020 has been amended to reflect the COVID-19 crisis. The revised version will be published soon.
- Please see attached June Executive Board report (Appendix A) for full details of our efforts.

## **3. Resource Implications**

- Further to the June's Executive Board a further return has been made to MHCLG and will be reported to the Executive Board in July, this revised the Collection Fund deficit down by £19.3m to £41.6m and pressures have also been reviewed. The projected overspend is now £173.4m, compared to £197.6m in June's report.
- Following the recent government announcement of a further package of financial support for local government this has led to a revised 2020/21 council funding gap of £64.9m and a revised funding gap in 2021/22 of £133.9m.
- Whilst this additional financial support is welcome, it is currently not enough to fully meet the Council's full financial needs in 2020/21, 2021/22 and beyond.

## **Recommendations**

- a) Offer condolences to those who have lost loved ones through this pandemic.
- b) Show our appreciation to those who have worked and volunteered through this crisis, and to the public for the part they play.
- c) Note the reports that have been provided to Executive Board reporting progress and issues throughout the phases of this pandemic.
- d) Write on behalf of council to all partners to express appreciation for their efforts and ongoing support.

## **Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

None.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Update on Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan- 24 June Executive Board paper

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.