

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Agenda Item 7**

**Date: 20 July 2020**

**Subject: Update on Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan**

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

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The unprecedented national and local developments of the coronavirus pandemic remain a huge global challenge. Our relentless focus has been to mobilise the city to help minimise the effects, especially on the most vulnerable, and to keep the people of the city safe. This approach has been as effective as possible with the resources and information available, with the council now building on this learning to progress the implementation of the recovery and resumption phase.
- As we enter the next stage of further lifting of restrictions nationally, the local multi-agency arrangements have been modified to reflect this, including outbreak management. Our recovery and service resumption approach continues to be driven by our shared ambition and values, with the overriding priority of tackling poverty and inequalities consistent with our vision of a strong economy and a compassionate and caring city. Extensive communications has continued with the full range of stakeholders during this period.
- The recently launched Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan ([link to plan here](#)) will be key to reducing local transmission of COVID-19, working with partners to prevent and manage outbreaks. Led by the Director of Public Health, the city wide plan has been developed building on our strong foundations and partnerships, working with stakeholders to scale up and enhance existing arrangements and services and increase

capacity, recognising the key role of effective communication and engagement to develop an integrated national and local system to meet the needs of local communities.

- Councils have a key role to supporting the new test and trace service across England, aiming to control the spread of infection. Contact tracing is one component of the Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan and will link in with the full range of public health tools and techniques.

## Our outbreak control plan means:



### Prevention



Promoting social distancing, handwashing and face covering



Supporting workplaces, schools and other settings to operate safely



Working with communities, employers and third sector partners

### Test & Trace



Raising awareness of the symptoms of coronavirus



Encouraging anyone with symptoms to book a free NHS test and self-isolate



Opening mobile, drive-in and walk-in testing sites

### Managing Outbreaks



Having local test and trace that works with the NHS service



Community based support for those who are self-isolating



Monitoring the spread of coronavirus using national and local data



Helping workplaces, schools and other settings to manage outbreaks

- This report describes the local approach to planning and delivery and the current main issues under each theme of the Response and Recovery Plan.
- Other sections include the continued approach to risk management and governance. Given the significance of the financial implications, both additional costs and lost income, there is a separate report on the agenda outlining the latest position and the issues.
- Some examples, since the last report, of activity and impact across the city are as follows and are depicted in an infographic at the end of this section:
  - Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan published on the 30<sup>th</sup> June.
  - Over £148 million business grants have been paid (as at 14 July), with £1,612,817 paid to local businesses via the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund. (as of 9 July).
  - 350 businesses applied for new Digital Resilience Voucher, in the first five days when the scheme was launched.
  - 88,200 employees have been furloughed in Leeds and the number of people starting a claim for Universal Credit in Leeds almost doubled to 62,884 by May.
  - Micro Business Support Service has hosted chat events, including engaging with 79 businesses and 121 telephone support sessions.
  - Employment and Skills Team have supported 1,140 people into work including 62 into apprenticeships (April – June 2020).
  - Leeds Train Station saw a 51% increase in footfall on the 4th July.
  - Major transport schemes have continued to be delivered throughout lockdown e.g. Regents Street flyover replacement
  - 70% of high schools are using the Start in Leeds online careers guidance platform
  - 13 child care hubs remain open.
  - 34,390 school meals are being provided to children each week, including 1,890 grab bags and 2,500 hampers.
  - There are currently 44,180 people shielding in Leeds. 19,214 are registered with the national shielding support programme. 85,628 texts, 28,326 emails, 10,054 letters, 7,271 calls have been made to people who are shielding.
  - 199 people supported in emergency accommodation.
  - Supporting 3637 people through home care and 2852 people in care homes
  - Museums and galleries are starting to open this month, along with some Community Hubs.
  - Over 100,000 recorded visits to Household Waste and Recycling Centres since they reopened in May.
  - Refuse collections have been maintained despite record total tonnage across all waste streams with black bins around 20% above the normal amount and green bins around 10% higher.
  - All meetings of the council's Council, Executive Board, Plans Panels, Scrutiny Board and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee have re-started remotely.

# Coronavirus – summary of council impact



July 2020



## Leeds Local Outbreak Plan

published on the  
30th June



## £1,612,817 paid to local businesses

via the Local Authority  
Discretionary Grant Fund  
(as of 9th July)



## 70% of high schools

are using the Start in  
Leeds online careers  
guidance platform



## 51% increase in footfall

at Leeds Train Station  
on the 4th July



## 13 child care hubs remain open



## 100,000 visits

to Household Waste  
and Recycling  
Centres  
(since they re-opened)



## All meetings of the council's Executive Board

Planning, Scrutiny Board,  
Corporate Governance  
and Audit Committee have  
re-started remotely



## 49,200 food bags

distributed by the  
Emergency Food  
Service over 15  
weeks to 5th July



85,628  
texts  
28,326  
emails  
10,054  
letters  
7,271  
calls

calls have been made to  
people who are shielding



## Major transport schemes

have continued to be  
delivered throughout  
lockdown e.g.  
Regents Street  
flyover replacement



1,890  
grab bags  
2,500  
hampers

are being delivered  
weekly to school  
children



1,140  
people

supported  
into work  
including 62 into  
apprenticeships  
(April – June 2020)

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

- As described in previous reports, the version agreed at February Full Council has been amended to ensure that the current COVID context is captured, in so far as is possible given the continued uncertainty, and it will be published soon. A further, more fundamental review of the suite of city strategies will be undertaken later in the year when we have a deeper understanding of the wider health, social and economic impacts of the virus. However, work continues to ensure the three pillars that underpin our city ambition: **inclusive growth; health and wellbeing; and climate change**, are centred on the overriding priority of **tackling poverty and inequalities**; and, are joined up as we focus on the complex and potentially long-lasting recovery period, which will require all potential capacity in the city, including the public and businesses, fully engaged and playing their role.

## 3. **Resource Implications**

- There is a separate and more detailed Financial Health monitoring report included on the agenda for this meeting, so the details are not repeated here.

## 4. **Recommendations**

Executive Board is requested to:

- Note the updated context, progress and issues as we move through phases of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Note the launch of the Leeds COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan to ensure effective local arrangements regarding outbreak management and linked to national testing and tracing approach.
- Note the emerging issues for consideration during the next phase of recovery.
- Recognise the need for vigilance across the city as we move into the next phase with an emphasis on stay safe messaging.
- Use this paper as context for the more detailed financial health monitoring paper on the financial implications of coronavirus for the council.

### 1. **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This fifth report updates Executive Board on the coronavirus (COVID-19) work across the city including the emerging recovery approach, outbreak management, and current issues and risks. The city's multi-agency command and control arrangements continue to be used with the Response and Recovery plan aiming to mitigate the effects of the outbreak on those in the city, especially the most vulnerable, and prepare for the longer term planning of stages of recovery including local outbreak planning.

### 2. **Background information**

- 2.1 Since the outbreak of the coronavirus in December 2019, a large number of cases continue to be recorded across the world, including the United Kingdom. The

government has taken a significant number of further measures during this period which have eased the lockdown restrictions. The most recent announcements since the June Executive Board paper are in Annex A. Full details of guidance and communications issued by the government can be found on the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk).

- 2.2 The number of COVID-19 cases are being updated daily on the .gov.uk website [COVID-19 cases by local authority](#). Nationally, as at 14 July there have been 291,373 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the UK and 44,968 deaths. Leeds has 3,673 confirmed cases and 635 deaths as of 14 July. The methodology for reporting positive cases changed on 2 July which accounts for the significant increase in reported cases since the last update to Executive Board. Of the 635 COVID-19 related deaths registered so far, this data includes place of death, 257 (40.5%) occurred in a care home, 22 (3.5%) at home, 12 (1.9%) in a hospice and 344 (54.2%) in hospital. To date, 25% of all deaths registered have been COVID-19 related. The numbers of excess deaths in Leeds continues to fall. For the week ending 12 July, there was a 23.2% reduction in the number of deaths registered in the Leeds district compared to the same period in 2019.
- 2.3 We receive a range of data on a daily basis to inform our local position and response, including information on new positive cases and any outbreaks affecting Leeds residents. The Weekly Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID -19) Surveillance Report, produced by Public Health England, summarises information from a variety of surveillance systems covering national data on cases, age, gender, rates, ethnicity, NHS111, google searches, general practice consultations, emergency attendances, hospitalisation rates deaths (age, ethnicity, excess mortality) antibody testing, global data. There is also regional data and weekly rates of cases by local authority including a PHE top 10 of UTLAs with the highest weekly rate of cases (link [here](#)). As of 14 July, Leeds has a 7 day infection rate of 6.6 per 100,000. This is lower than the Yorkshire and Humber rate (13.1 per 100,000) and the rates in neighbouring West Yorkshire authorities. The overall trend shows that case numbers are declining in Leeds. We will continue to focus on preventative measures to keep infections low, and closely monitor this and other data to inform our local response as part of the Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Plan.

### 3. **Main issues**

- 3.1 The Leeds multi-agency command and control arrangements for the outbreak, as described in previous Executive Board reports, are set alongside the wider governance and delivery framework at a sub-regional level including the West Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- 3.2 The Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan sets out how local partners will work together to reduce transmission of COVID-19, prevent and manage outbreaks. This is a city wide plan and developed with our key partners, under the leadership of the Director of Public Health (DPH). The plan covers the context and background to the development of local outbreak control plans, the principles which will guide our approach and how we will deliver this for the people of Leeds by scaling up our capacity. We will take a proactive, preventative and positive approach, with an emphasis on what people can do to keep themselves safe and support others. We will work to engage communities, businesses and the third sector and do extensive communications, overseen by the newly established Outbreak Control Board chaired by the Leader.

- 3.3 The multi-agency arrangements have been further developed to reflect the risks that local outbreaks present as restrictions are lifted, including with the Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan. As the nature of the pandemic changes, the phases of the response and recovery plan have shifted to recovery and resumption, driven by our shared ambition and values, with the overriding priority of tackling poverty and inequalities consistent with our vision of a strong economy and a compassionate and caring city. Extensive communications has continued with the full range of stakeholders during this period.
- 3.4 The attached Response and Recovery Plan (Annex B) details the scale of activity and updates from across the multi-agency arrangements. The Leeds Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG Gold) Dashboard for w/c 13<sup>th</sup> July to highlight the most recent position at Annex C.
- 3.5 The section below provides Executive Board with a specific update on the key emerging issues under each strand of the Response and Recovery Plan, which highlight a range of key considerations for the council as we progress and move forward in the next phase of recovery.
- 3.6 **Local Outbreak Control Management**
- 3.7 Good progress is being made within all of the key work streams of the outbreak control plan. These work streams mean partnership working at a local, regional and national level to develop joint working arrangements and increase resources to support incident and outbreak management. Additional work streams focusing on workplaces and NHS settings have been established under bronze arrangements.
- 3.8 Whilst well established local systems for outbreak management are already in place, one of the key current challenges is capacity to strengthen proactive and preventative work whilst managing emerging local situations. Additional capacity is being developed for the health protection team, environmental health team and infection prevention control team but is not yet in place. A weekly incident management team meeting is being held to review any incidents or outbreaks occurring across Leeds, look at the local data and intelligence and use this to support a timely operational response to any emerging issues. Extensive plans in place for proactive and reactive communications to support outbreak planning.
- 3.9 Planning for different potential situations and outbreaks including clarification around roles and responsibilities across the system is one of the next key areas to strengthen.
- 3.10 **Health and Social care**
- 3.11 Health services are restarting services that were suspended to allow the prioritisation of COVID. Throughout this period, the NHS in Leeds has ensured that that people in Leeds (and beyond) could access treatment for urgent and life or limb-threatening conditions or emergencies.
- 3.12 Due to the suspension of routine work for so many weeks, a significant waiting list has built up and capacity remains reduced as COVID patients remain in the hospital and social distancing measures are in place in all clinical settings. As capacity is greatly reduced, the first priority is to treat clinically urgent patients, using the full range of both NHS and private sector providers.

- 3.13 The hospital is now able to respond to routine referrals from primary care, enabling new patients to access advice and support as far as possible, although if face to face appointments are needed, these may need to be delayed for further clinical space to be made available to enable social distancing.
- 3.14 Referrals to social care are back to nearly normal levels and, after a dip in referrals, we have seen an increase in the number of safeguarding concerns raised to above 2019 levels. We are seeing a very marked difference in service utilisation with up to a fourfold increase in the number of new home care packages and a very significant drop in the number of care home admissions as people express a clear preference for their relative to remain living at home. We currently support 3637 people through home care and 2852 people in care homes.
- 3.15 Services are now taking steps to resume day services with advice recently issued on how to do this safely. Some Day services have never ceased and others have changed how they were delivered. We envisage more day services opening in August and September.
- 3.16 Active planning for winter has already started with predictions around the rate of infection covering a wide range so the key issue will be flexibility and the ability to mobilise additional services quickly and effectively.
- 3.17 **Infrastructure and Supplies**
- 3.18 Considerable planning is taking place across all agencies to ensure sufficient capacity across the transport network with associated communications in place ready for the September / October return to schools, students to campus and more people resuming work generally. This includes monitoring of traffic flows should they increase to or even exceed pre-lockdown levels especially in the late summer / early Autumn period as this could have major implications for the progress of existing and planned transport infrastructure schemes on the network. The safe access to all educational establishments in September / October will be very challenging and may require further financial support from government.
- 3.19 An important recent step has been a move to a “travel safe” pledge (travel at quieter times, wash your hands, wear a face covering) from the recent “essential journeys only” on public transport, however it is not known at this stage how this will influence transport usage and impact capacity. Passenger messaging (via social media) is being enhanced to highlight potential service overcrowding.
- 3.20 Active travel measures continue at pace with West Yorkshire Combined Authority awarded £2.513m of funding from the DfT’s Emergency Active Travel Fund. The conditions of the funding require a start on site in 4 weeks and completion in 12 weeks. Given the tight timescales, all schemes will be undertaken on a trial basis with feedback sought from the public to then adjust, abandon or make permanent the emergency measures. Guidance on bids for a further larger round of funding to be delivered this financial year is expected in July.
- 3.21 The current position of supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the care sector has significantly improved and prices have started to fall although a backup system is still in place to provide emergency supplies. However, the demand and supplies for PPE still remains a significant challenge during this period as the city

prepares to open more services. To build capacity at a local level, the Director of City Development is chairing a new group, looking to develop a West Yorkshire Health and Social Care procurement and supply chain for PPE.

### 3.22 **Business and Economy**

- 3.23 The ONS's June Labour Market Update showed that the number of workers on UK payrolls dropped by more than 600,000 between March and May this year, although it is thought that the full effect on employment of the lockdown measures will not be felt until wage support schemes end in October. From the start of the year, the number of people starting a claim for Universal Credit in Leeds almost doubled to 62,884 by May. The number of Leeds residents out of work claiming Universal Credit increased by 11,412 to a total of 32,538 - an increase of 54% during the same period, with the number of Leeds residents in work claiming Universal Credit increasing by 7,270 or 69%. Recent data from WYCA's/Chamber of Commerce latest quarterly business survey confirms these trends, with a significant fall in activity on all key indicators in the second quarter of 2020 in Leeds City Region. Domestic sales and exports fell at a faster rate than seen in the 2008 crash, and companies' cash-flow position also deteriorated markedly. However, the majority of businesses reported employment levels unchanged, further suggesting the furlough scheme is helping to mitigate unemployment for the time being at least.
- 3.24 The rate of recovery from the COVID-19 emergency will be constrained by the need to protect the health of the public. It could be many months before all restrictions are lifted and response and recovery will therefore sometimes overlap. The COVID-19 pandemic has served to speed up trends that were already evident in the economy, which means that we will need to be ready to accelerate, stop or change our work to recover. Initial discussions have taken place with elected members and key officers to provide a framework to support recovery, as well as with the Inclusive Growth Ambassadors, and consideration is being given to key areas of focus which align to the areas outlined in the West Yorkshire Recovery Plan.
- 3.25 The demand for business support has surged as a consequence of the virus and its impact on businesses across all sectors. The Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund support grants have continued to be processed with 12,058 grants paid to a value of £148,200,000 (as at 14 July 2020). The Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund Scheme closed on 28 June with 960 applications received and payments totalling £1,612,817 as at 9 July. The Leeds City Region (LCR) Scheme Digital Enterprise, delivered by the council has been awarded a further £5.5m of funding for the next 3 years, taking the total funding opportunity to £10.5m for the 3 years. With the first five days of the release, 350 businesses applied for funding via a new Digital Resilience Voucher scheme. Further examples of business support schemes are detailed in Annex B. Resources to provide the levels and types of support required are limited. Businesses continue to be focused on the safety of customers and employees; the long term sustainability of their business models and restructures and redundancies particularly in those sectors hardest hit. Given the continuing risk of local lockdowns, there is a need for the development of a flexible and agile response to the potential impacts on affected businesses.
- 3.26 The Employment and Skills service continues to support a number of companies that are restructuring/reducing staff numbers through redundancies. It is anticipated that as support from government and for furloughed employees tapers, the need for support to staff notified of redundancy will increase. The service will provide an

account manager to support managers and staff to connect with employers recruiting to the same or similar skills sets where possible and access to training and employment support services. A successful bid with Bradford Council to secure a £2.91m ESIF funded programme, will see from July the delivery of employment support for young people 15-24 years identified as NEET to improve their skills and significantly increase their prospects of moving into sustained employment. In Leeds, the support will be targeted to over 1,100 young people with poor mental health, including those with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, to secure training and work over the next three years. The new Employment and Skills Leeds website was launched on 13 July to provide a single access 'portal' or central place on-line where the revised and changing offer to local residents and employers can be accessed.

3.27 The creative sector has been particularly affected by the pandemic. Research commissioned by the Creative Industries Fund, (CIF) into the economic impact of COVID-19 on industries including music, theatre, film, TV, fashion, publishing, architecture, museums and galleries, suggests a drop in revenues equating to £1.4bn a week over a year and the loss of circa one in five creative jobs. The cultural vibrancy of Leeds contributes to downstream economic benefits including tourism, place making and physical regeneration. The significance of the creative sector in Leeds is further highlighted with over 22,000 FTE jobs in 2017 and a GVA contribution approaching £2bn. The council led on a region-wide survey of the creative sector in May. It found that 87% of creative businesses based in or operating in Leeds had suffered financially due to coronavirus, with 33% of businesses putting staff on furlough; and 23% reducing staff hours, expecting to make staff redundant or will be terminating employment/contracts. Based on financial reserves and current income levels, 12% of creative businesses had either closed or would close within one month and 52% could only continue for 1-6 months due to current restrictions. Arts Council England recently announced the award of emergency grants to four organisations in the city they fund to cover core costs until September; Leeds Playhouse, Northern Ballet, Slung Low and The Tetley.

3.28 On 5 July, the government announced a £1.57bn package of support including emergency grants and loans, to help protect the future of the UK's world-renowned galleries, museums, heritage sites, music venues, independent cinemas and other cultural venues as well as local venues. Further guidance on how this will support the creative sector in Leeds is expected but the institutions applying for the new grants and loans will have to evidence how they contribute to wider economic growth. Guidance for a phased return of the performing arts, starting with performances behind closed doors and rehearsals, is also expected to be published by the government shortly.

### 3.29 **Citizens and Communities**

3.30 On 2 July, the government announced plans for schools and colleges to reopen in full in September. Current restrictions on group sizes will be lifted to allow schools, colleges and nurseries to fully reopen to all children and young people. COVID-19 secure measures will remain in place to reduce the risk of transmission, with schools being asked to keep children in class or year group sized 'bubbles'. School attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.

3.31 The council is working through the expectations set in the guidance of the education sector with some of the following issues highlighting the local considerations and potential responses described below:

- Schools will complete revised risk assessments to enable a return to full capacity. In Leeds, the Schools' Health and Safety Team are producing a template document to support head teachers in this process.
- School leaders must ensure that public health advice is followed in their setting, for example people who are ill stay at home, there is robust hand and respiratory hygiene, enhanced cleaning takes place and there is active engagement with NHS Test and Trace.
- Leaders are required to keep the number of contacts between children and staff as low as possible. It is envisaged that this can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining distance between individuals. It is likely that for younger children the emphasis will be on separating groups, and for older children it will be on distancing. In primary school, this might mean creating a class bubble of thirty pupils. This bubble would be staffed by the same people every day, arriving at different times from other groups, being kept separate in the playground and eating lunch 'in the bubble'.
- In secondary school, because pupils in key stage 4 and 5 study a range of subjects, a bubble might be the size of a year group. Pupils will inevitably see more than one or two teachers in order to receive subject specific teaching, but staff and pupils are more likely to adhere to social distancing rules than younger children.
- Maintaining the integrity of class bubbles will likely be problematic in the new system. Wrap around care at breakfast and after school clubs may contain a mix of pupils from different groups. Similarly, pupils taking school transport will not necessarily be carried in the same bubbles in which they are taught due to the fact that where they live does not correspond with the subjects they study. In Leeds, the local authority is supporting school leaders to find creative solutions to these problems through the work of 3 bronze groups (primary, secondary and special) as well as an additional task and finish group.
- From September, schools will be required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum and only suspend subjects for pupils in exceptional circumstances. In addition, schools should consider the provision of pastoral and extra-curricular activities designed to support pupils with the rebuilding of friendships and social engagement, address and equip pupils to respond to issues linked to coronavirus and support pupils with approaches to improving their physical and mental wellbeing. The Learning Inclusion Team and the Health and Well-being team have produced a number of useful resources to support teachers with this.
- Schools are expected to have a strong contingency plan in place to ensure the continuation of education remotely should a further local lockdown be enforced.

3.32 The resilience of the Third Sector remains a concern and the a recently established Bronze group work continues to understand the potential impact of COVID-19 on third sector organisations and communities and develop actions aimed to maintain the scope, diversity, capacity and sustainability of the Third Sector in Leeds.

3.33 Throughout June, a series of discussions co-chaired with Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) were held with the Voluntary Hub organisations to review progress, consider the learning and make recommendations for immediate next steps and longer-term potential of building on the city's response to the crisis. Immediate issues are being

addressed through the Communities Silver Group with VAL exploring a longer term development of a new model within localities. A further £165k of funding has been agreed and the distribution of this funding is currently being discussed with Voluntary Hubs with a view to a rapid distribution.

- 3.34 There is a clear trend of domestic violence incidents increasing over the last 14 weeks. The Front Door Safeguarding Hub has seen a sustained increase in domestic violence and abuse (DVA) cases, with the number of repeat cases also increasing. There are concerns around the increased volume of high risk DVA cases which require a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). Around a third of all reported incidents have children present and Children's Social Care and the Early Help Hubs continue to provide support to these families. In response to the challenges of the increased volume of domestic violence and abuse incidents and the progress of the Domestic Abuse Bill through Parliament, the Safer Leeds Executive has agreed to establish a new Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Partnership Board. This group will lead the development of the strategic response to DVA and complete a full needs assessment to support the commissioning of accommodation and support services. The new arrangements will run from September 2020 in preparation for the new legal duties from April 2021.
- 3.35 National advice to shield at home is also changing on 1 August, but the "clinically extremely vulnerable" group remain a high risk group. The Shielding Bronze Group is undertaking a rapid review on the possibility of increased vulnerability for some in this cohort because of impact of months of shielding- particularly in relation to frailty, low vitamin D, mental health and financial impact on people who have been unable to work from home or who still may be unable to return to work in August. Planning is underway to ensure support for this group can be transitioned to mainstream where possible – including welfare, advice, support for ageing well and accessing food and to ensure that local support to this group can be stepped up in the event of full shielding advice at a local or national level is reinstated.
- 3.36 The levels of calls to the COVID helpline have reduced over the last month and are now around 25% of the call levels at the height of the demand. The helpline is still operating through the working week, with reduced hours on Saturday but is no longer operating on Sundays. However, there is still a need to provide advice and support around food, fuel, medicines, loneliness and poverty. Planning is underway to ensure citizens continue to get the help and support they need through the Local Welfare Support Scheme.
- 3.37 **Organisational impact**
- 3.38 A key consideration is the continuing work with trade unions to amend guidance around employees safely returning to work. Effective Silver command and control arrangements remain in place within the organisation, with ongoing engagement with chief officers to deliver an effective and consistent approach to recovery and resumption of services. We continue to use national guidance and have developed a Lifting Lockdown in Leeds Plan to coordinate the resumption of services across the organisation as we move through the current phase. In recent weeks there has been significant changes to national guidance and work has continued to manage and respond to the implications on key organisational processes and arrangements.

3.39 In light of the recent announcements from national government relating to the easing of restrictions for those who are shielding, the current guidance relating vulnerable staff has been reviewed and updated in consultation with trade unions. Revised guidance has moved emphasis away from categorisation to a risk based approach to assess individual circumstances. A Step-by-Step framework has been developed to enable managers to support employees with key risk factors back to work where it is safe to do so. Risk factors include:

- employees who have to adhere stringently to social distancing and other guidelines (originally defined as Category 2),
- employees who have been instructed to shield (originally defined as Category 1)
- employees that do not fall into these categories, but that have other key risk factors such as BAME staff and males over 60 or
- employees who are living with or caring for someone who has to adhere stringently to social distancing and other guidelines or who have been instructed to shield

Guidance will continue to be reviewed regularly and in accordance with the wider national context.

3.40 National government guidance highlights that social distancing must remain in place in the community and workplace to control the spread of COVID-19. In order to achieve a 2m distance within the office, building capacity the last time it was reported was limited to 20%. On the 23 June, it was announced by national government that social distancing rules for England will be relaxed from 4 July. However, the new guidance stipulates that one metre plus should be adhered to only where it is not possible to maintain a two metre distance. A review into the implications of this guidance on building capacity has been completed and the expectation is that the new guidance would only increase capacity to around 35% due to social distancing restrictions in communal areas and lifts. As the current capacity of 20% is able to meet the current demand of those staff for whom it is necessary to return to the office, and the preference remains at a national level to maintain a 2 metre distance where possible, the current arrangements will be maintained and will be reviewed as the situation develops.

3.41 In order to enable a high proportion of staff to work effectively from home, numerous interventions have been implemented by the Digital and Information Service (DIS) in response to challenges initiated by the unprecedented demand on digital systems. Work has been completed over the last few months to upgrade the digital infrastructure with the network capacity being substantially increased on 6 July. Parallel to this development, is the accelerated roll out of Microsoft Teams on 6 July, providing an alternative platform for video conferencing and subsequently relieving the pressure on existing software.

3.42 The current challenges presented by COVID-19 on the council finances remain a key area of focus. There is a separate and more detailed Financial Health monitoring report included on the agenda for this meeting which describes these financial pressures on the organisation.

### 3.43 **Media and communications:**

- 3.44 Communications systems and work streams were adapted in the early stages to support the council's active management of the pandemic. As it has progressed these have been further adapted and enhanced to incorporate recovery work. The main challenge in coming months will be in managing capacity as activity is scaled up further alongside both the continued recovery and increased commitment to supporting the developing test and trace and outbreak control work. Extensive communications planning is supporting the outbreak control plan, to keep people informed and ensure "no surprises" whilst also respecting confidentiality.
- 3.45 We have sent a weekly GovDelivery bulletin since the start of lockdown to 116k residents which averages open rates of 47-51% (industry standard excellent response 10-20%). This, along with digital, social and marketing campaigns, has been used to provide information on changes to council services, support as well as wider information including health messaging such as hand hygiene, social distancing, and Your NHS is Here For You to help address lack of patients accessing health services for critical care and life-threatening illness. We have worked with partners including WYCA to issue communications around public transport and safe usage, and redirect where possible to active travel such as walking and cycling, including a push on new cycling routes and safer infrastructure through the Connecting Leeds brand and consultation. We have also supported businesses through regular communication of business grants and support measures, safe reopening guidance, and a campaign #ReDiscoverLeeds to safely welcome people back into the city to address some of the economic impacts with measures including social distancing, signage, what to expect and what to do.
- 3.46 There has been a significant increase in media work activity, with a 44% rise in enquiries from journalists compared to the same period last year. There has also been an overall rise of 25% in the number of proactive press releases, 40% of which were COVID-19 related, for the same period. Nine press conferences have been hosted for local and regional media, along with many individual story discussions and interviews. A considerable amount of extra effort has been invested in monitoring, engaging and messaging on the council's social media channels. COVID-19-related work continues to be much of the team's focus as plans are being put in place to drive forward the communications work supporting the Leeds Outbreak Control Board and ongoing management of the pandemic through community engagement, media, social media and campaign activity. While there was a 25% drop in proactive "business as usual" press releases, this was during a period when many council services were scaled down and events cancelled and the overall increase in proactive work suggests that while the COVID-19 work continues now that services are getting back on-stream this may lead to a further increase in demand on the service.

## **Corporate considerations**

### **4. Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1 Extensive engagement continues between services within the council, with partners, with elected members and with the public. As in previous reports during COVID, it has not always been possible to engage in the normal way about service changes as there has been no choice about many of the changes to ensure

compliance with national guidance. Ward members have played a key role in engaging the public, particularly in encouraging neighbourliness, volunteering to help the vulnerable, and now on outbreak planning. We have endeavoured to keep people up to date with developments as best we can. Engagement with stakeholders has continued and in many cases been strengthened with the context of what we have had to manage during this incident. Regular written updates to partners, weekly messages to the public, regular thank you notes to staff and calls with MPs, head teachers, and businesses. Engagement with staff has continued including via staff surveys and Staff Network groups

## **5. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 5.1 These considerations are an implicit part of the planning, particularly given the nature of the incident and this will continue, for example with prioritisation of services for vulnerable people and monitoring of potential community tensions and the impact on inequalities. Snapshot data on this has been provided in previous reports and in the councillor/MP updates. Future reports will also cover this.

## **6. Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 6.1 In terms of the Best Council Plan, the version that was agreed at February Full Council has been amended to ensure that the current COVID context is accurately captured, it will be published soon. A further, more fundamental review of the suite of city strategies will be undertaken later in the year when we have a deeper understanding of the wider health, social and economic impacts of the virus. However, work continues to ensure the three pillars that underpin our city ambition: **inclusive growth; health and wellbeing; and climate change**, are centred on the overriding priority of **tackling poverty and inequalities**; and, are joined up as we focus on the complex and potentially long-lasting recovery period, which will require all potential capacity in the city, including the public and businesses, fully engaged and playing their role.

## **7. Climate Emergency**

- 7.1 As we continue to develop our recovery plans these will incorporate the promotion of more sustainable and healthy movement of people; exploring new ways of working, adopting digital technology and home working; emphasising the value of green spaces and local community as well as looking to focus on green investments.

## **8. Resources, procurement and value for money**

- 8.1 There is a separate and more detailed Financial Health monitoring report included on the agenda for this meeting, so the details are not repeated here.

## **9. Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 9.1 With the agreement of the Chair, given the significance and scale of this issue, it is appropriate for the Board to receive an update at this meeting. However, this report is coming to Executive Board as a late paper due to the fast paced nature of developments of this issue and in order to ensure Board Members receive the most

up to date information as possible. A further verbal update on developments since the publication of this report will be provided at the Board meeting.

## **10. Risk management**

10.1 The risks related to coronavirus referenced throughout this report will continue to be monitored through the council's existing risk management processes. For example under two of the main standing risks of "Major incident in the city" and "Major Business continuity issue for the council". Other corporate risks, such as those relating to the council's budget and the Leeds economy have also been updated to reflect the impact of the outbreak. More specific risks relating to coronavirus are being managed through the Silver Groups, with the more significant ones being escalated onto the corporate coronavirus risk document seen in Annex D. The rating of this risk is difficult given the uncertainty, in light of that, a cautious approach is taken for the target rating.

## **11. Conclusions**

11.1 This report provides an update on the work completed and continuing to respond to the unprecedented global pandemic, which is still having a significant effect on all aspects of life and council business. This month has seen increased efforts on resuming services and supporting the reopening of aspects of the economy safely, working with members, staff, partners and the public. The Leeds COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan has also been launched and will be central to the local approach in reducing transmission of COVID-19 as well as preventing and managing outbreaks. As the city moves in to the next phase of recovery, there will be a range of considerations in responding to the challenges and opportunities as we continue to support the reopening of society and kick-start the economy.

## **12. Recommendations**

12.1 Executive Board is requested to:

- Note the updated context, progress and issues as we move through phases of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Note the launch of the Leeds COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan to ensure effective local arrangements regarding outbreak management and linked to national testing and tracing approach.
- Note the emerging issues for consideration during the next phase of recovery.
- Recognise the need for vigilance across the city as we move into the next phase with an emphasis on stay safe messaging.
- Use this paper as context for the more detailed financial health monitoring paper on the financial implications of coronavirus for the council.

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

13.1 None.

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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.

#### **14. Appendices:**

Annex A: National policy developments timeline

Annex B: Leeds Strategic Response and Recovery Plan – coronavirus (COVID-19)

Annex C: Leeds Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG Gold) Weekly Dashboard

Annex D: Corporate risk LCC 5: Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) – July 2020