

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**COVID-19: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the work of Nottinghamshire County Council, and the Council's response.

Information

2. The Coronavirus crisis has required a significant shift to the focus of Council activities to enable the Council to respond effectively and support those who are most vulnerable, both using its own resources and as part of a broader public service response to the emergency. The Council has prioritised its Adults and Children's social care functions, and its related work with health and community partners to support those most vulnerable to the virus.
3. As a consequence of responding to COVID-19, services, resources, functions, plans and programmes have been re- and de-prioritised as the Council has responded to a rapidly changing and fluid situation that has included the regular provision of new guidance and legislation. National measures in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 mean some services have necessarily been altered, reduced or suspended.

Public Health Update

4. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus which spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
5. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic on 11th March 2020 because of its global spread.
6. The current numbers of COVID-19 cases in the UK and Nottinghamshire can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-COVID-19-information-for-the-public>.
7. The Office for National Statistics released COVID-19 deaths data for lower-tier local authorities on 21st April 2020. This release included deaths that occurred to the end of 10th

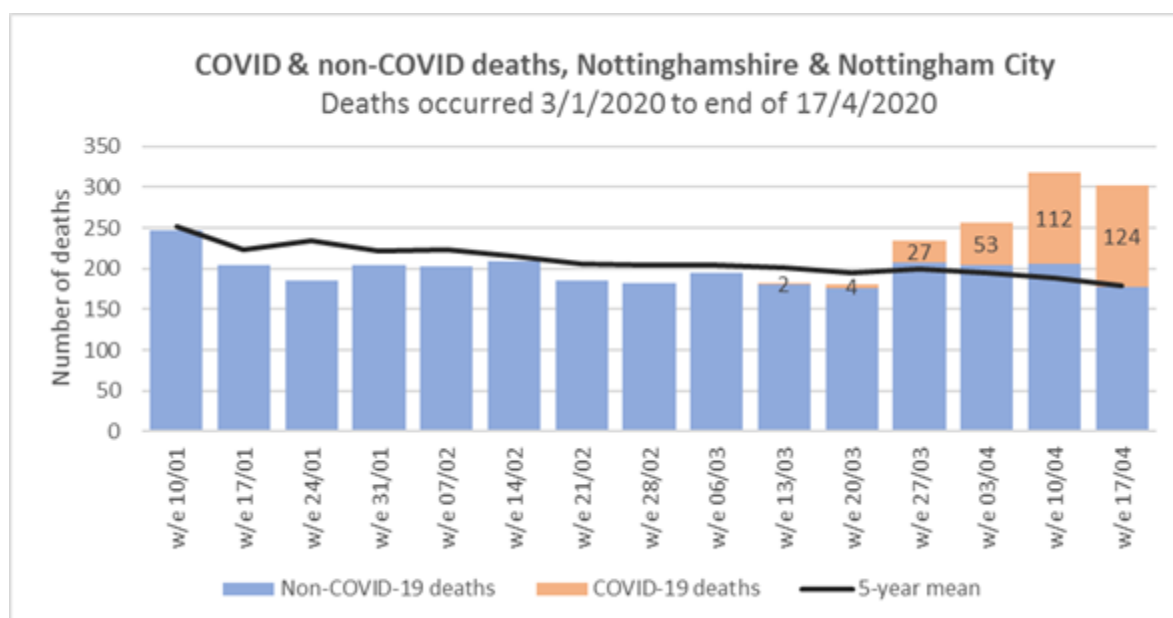
April 2020. The first COVID-19 deaths in Nottinghamshire were in the week starting on 7th March 2020. The two people were resident in Broxtowe Borough and Rushcliffe Borough, and both died in hospital.

8. Between 7th March and 10th April 2020, there were 157 deaths in Nottinghamshire where COVID-19 was recorded on death certificates and 910 deaths in total. A breakdown by District and Borough is shown below:

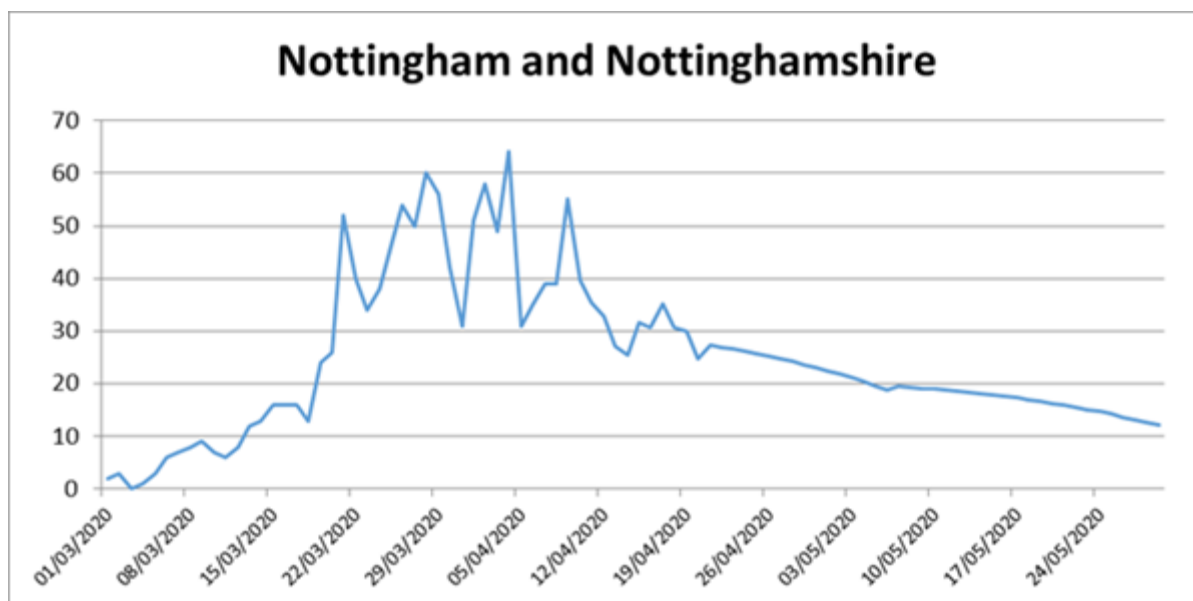
COVID-19 and all other deaths, 7th March to 10th April

	COVID-19	All other causes	All deaths
Ashfield	33	127	160
Bassetlaw	8	95	103
Broxtowe	22	100	122
Gedling	27	108	135
Mansfield	30	112	142
Newark and Sherwood	21	108	129
Rushcliffe	16	103	119
Nottinghamshire	157	753	910

9. Bassetlaw had the smallest number of deaths as of 10th April, but this may increase in later weeks as the impact of COVID-19 continues to spread across the country.
10. Between 7th March and 24th April 2020, there were 322 deaths in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City combined where COVID-19 was recorded on death certificates.



11. The number of new cases of COVID-19 in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City peaked in early April 2020. As of the 23rd April, the Local Resilience Forum Data and Information Cell has produced a projection of how the number of new cases will change over the subsequent weeks. This suggests a gradual fall from 30 or so per day to 10 per day by the third week in May.



Confirmed cases in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County (actuals to 15 April; projection thereafter)

National Public Health Measures

12. Early measures to manage the spread of COVID-19 were shaped by the national guidance and local plans for dealing with the early phases of a pandemic of influenza. These included detecting early cases and identifying their close contacts, as well as issuing a wide range of guidance for clinical and non-clinical settings.
13. As understanding of its epidemiology has developed, the UK government has introduced a range of measures more closely tailored to COVID-19. These have been based around a strategy of social distancing to reduce transmission to levels which can be managed within the surge capacity of health and social care systems. Other guidance and arrangements for reducing transmission include infection prevention control advice, guidance in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and a wealth of guidance for specific sectors and settings.
14. The Government's 5-testing strategy outlines how testing will be radically scaled up across 5 pillars of testing:
 - Swab testing for those with a medical need
 - Swab testing for critical workers in the NHS, social care and other sectors
 - Antibody testing to help determine if people have an immunity to coronavirus
 - Surveillance testing to learn more about the disease and help develop new tests and treatments
 - National effort to build mass-testing capacity
15. Modelling on which government strategy has been based suggests that the current measures would suppress the number of new cases, and the most recent data on actual new infections and hospitalisations confirms that this is what is happening. The same modelling also predicts that, in the absence of a vaccine, the number of new cases will rise again soon after current measures are lifted. To avoid a resurgence of COVID-19 at levels which would overwhelm the NHS and social care system, it is anticipated that any partial relaxation of the current social

distancing arrangements would need to be complemented by a return to, and scaling up of, testing and contact tracing.

Local Public Health Response

16. The Director for Public Health and his team have provided public health leadership on forecasting the profile of the epidemic in Nottinghamshire to inform capacity planning across the organisation and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
17. A challenge for the Health and Care sector nationwide has been the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support people that were either symptomatic or diagnosed with COVID-19. The Public Health team with support from other colleagues and in partnership with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), has been working intensively to source PPE from local suppliers and national stock and has put into place local arrangements to make sure that any urgent needs for PPE could be met in a timely way. This has included publishing and updating local guidance on the use of PPE, quantifying our overall needs and overseeing the distribution of stock according to a prioritisation framework to conserve and make the best use of stocks.
18. Swab tests are available for all NCC staff engaged in delivering the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, by self-referral. Swab testing facilities are operating from the Boots site in Beeston. Home testing kits are also being made available. This ensures that residents receiving support are protected and that those fit for work and not infected are able to get back to work as soon as possible.
19. The Public Health team have also been leading on addressing the complex needs of specific groups not otherwise met through Humanitarian Assistance work, as well as outbreak management. As government decides how to manage the next phase of the epidemic, there may be a need to refocus public health resource to assist in activities such as widescale contact tracing.

Emergency Response

Countywide Strategic Response

20. The Local Resilience Forum delivers emergency planning for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, ensuring the establishment of effective multi-agency responses to COVID-19. Thirty-eight partners from the public, private and voluntary sector are involved in the LRF COVID-19 response. The LRF is overseen by the police-led Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) and has established eight cells with relevant subgroups to deal with the far-reaching impacts of the coronavirus emergency.

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Humanitarian Assistance Group | • Communications Cell |
| • Logistics Cell | • Local Authorities Cell |
| • Excess Deaths Cell | • Data and Information Cell |
| • Finance Cell | • Discharge Cell |

These cells are overseen by the Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG), chaired by the NCC Director of Public Health, and the Health and Social Care Economy Tactical Co-ordinating Group (HSCETCG).

21. Council staff play a full role in the county-wide emergency response with officers chairing or participating in most groups.

Corporate Emergency Response

22. The Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) have had overall responsibility for overseeing the Council's response to COVID-19. CLT are meeting daily to receive updates from the chair of the Risk Safety and Emergency Management Board (RSEMB) and Corporate Directors on their services, provide leadership to protect critical services, address urgent issues and oversee communications with Members and staff. Data dashboards have been developed to allow CLT to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on Council activity and inform operational decision-making.

23. The RSEMB, chaired by the Service Director, Place and Communities and supported by the Emergency Planning team, is co-ordinating the County Council's response to COVID-19 across departments in order to prioritise critical service delivery. The RSEMB also connects the Council to the multi-agency response through the LRF. The group is attended by the chairs of the departmental Risk Safety and Emergency Management Groups (RSEMG), to report on the response, escalate issues of a strategic nature and receive actions to be undertaken departmentally. RSEMGs have been responsible for managing the continuity of critical services within departments in line with established business continuity plans.

24. All groups involved in the response to COVID-19 have kept records of all key operational decisions and actions and the Corporate Risk Register has been updated.

COVID-19 Programmes of Work

25. Members will be aware from the report taken to Policy Committee in March 2020 that five programmes of work were established to manage the response to the emergency both corporately and with partners county-wide. These are: -

- Support for vulnerable adults
- Support for vulnerable children and families including schools
- Community Support and Resilience
- Support for Business and the local Economy
- Corporate Resilience

Support for Vulnerable Adults

Coronavirus Legislation and Care Act Easements

26. The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into force on 31st March 2020. This legislation enables the relaxation of the need to comply with certain duties under the Care Act 2014.

27. The Government has issued statutory guidance on the Care Act Easements. These are designed to enable authorities to "prioritise the most pressing needs" among those to whom they would normally be under a legal duty of care. Accordingly Adult Social Care and Public Health (ASCPH) is able to ease its obligations if the workforce is significantly depleted, or demand on social care increased, to an extent that it is no longer reasonably practicable for it to comply with its Care Act duties (as they stand prior to amendment by the Coronavirus Act)

and where to continue to try to do so is likely to result in urgent or acute needs not being met, potentially risking life.

28. ASCPH have not enacted the Care Act easements. Instead, the expectation is that it is “business as usual” and the easements will be considered as required, dependent on service capacity and levels of risk experienced within services. Staff and people who use services will be informed as soon as possible if Care Act easements are to be implemented and the Council has developed a procedure for activating them if required, including discussion with relevant parties.

Emergency Coronavirus Operating Models

29. In recognition of the pandemic and following guidelines from central government to manage the pressure on the health and social care system, it has been necessary to reshape ASCPH’s operating model in order to prepare to respond to predicted demand for support. The new operating model is not part of the Care Act easements.
30. There are a number of areas of service that have been altered to manage the key areas of demand anticipated:
- The development of Integrated Health and Social Care Hubs to manage discharges from hospital, development of an enhanced START/Intake home care service and a brokerage service that will screen and broker available home care services (see section below on new hospital discharge process).
 - Support for people who would normally attend building-based day services so they can receive the support required in different ways and in their own home to minimise risk to their wellbeing.
 - An enhanced Care Support and Enablement service (CSE) supporting Living Well adults in supported living and outreach.
 - The re-opening of Bishops Court Residential Home to support people who may temporarily need bed-based support due to the impact of COVID-19 on their normal support arrangements.
 - The development of a Vulnerable People service which will link into START/in-house home care, the Integrated Hub/Occupational Therapy Hub and the CSE.
 - A reduced assessment team offer to manage referrals to community teams and allow resources to be directed to higher demand areas.
 - Amended operating hours for critical services to 7 days a week 8am to 8pm to align with national guidance on supporting hospital discharge to maintain capacity in the NHS at all times.
 - Implementation of a daily demand and capacity system to ensure clear oversight of critical teams where pressures are increasing so these risks can be managed quickly and effectively.

31. Comprehensive staff guidance has been developed and issued to support colleagues to understand and adapt to the alternative operating model.
32. On 15 April the government published a COVID-19 Adult Social Care Action plan and following review of this document, the alternative operating model set out in this report is in line with this national plan.

New hospital discharge model

33. Alongside the Care Act easements, instruction was issued nationally on how local authorities would manage hospital discharge on a Discharge to Assess model. The aim is to support a patient discharge as soon as clinically safe to do so within 3 hours. In response to this, Nottinghamshire health and care organisations are now working closer together for all discharges in hubs. There are 2 main hubs one in Mid and North Notts (covering discharges from Sherwood Forest and Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals with Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust) and one in South of the County (covering discharges from Nottingham University Hospitals also working with Nottingham City Council, City Care and Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust). Staff are working from home and remotely as much as possible to complete needs assessment away from acute settings utilising technology such as Microsoft Teams and Skype.
34. Within Adult Social Care the discharge process is now supported by a new Intake Service around the existing START service to review care needs on discharge. This extra resource prevents delays to discharges where providers are unable to support some packages quickly enough. Where on-going packages of care are required after referral to the Intake Service this will be procured using existing commissioned providers.

Social Care Provider Support

35. A high proportion of services provided on behalf of the Council are delivered by independent companies including very small providers, right through to some national organisations with whom there are very positive, proactive and highly valued partnerships. This has stood the Council in good stead during the current pandemic. We also support people who have Direct Payments and arrange their own care either with individuals or organisations and who may well employ their own care staff.
36. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the Council very quickly developed 'financial principles' for working with partners, in recognition of the financial pressure the crisis presented. As such, providers are being paid for commissioned hours irrespective of delivery, as long as the provider works with the Council to best support the needs of residents. This gave providers reassurance about what their income would be to enable them to concentrate on providing their services to local people during these very challenging times.
37. In addition to this, providers are able to seek agreement for other additional costs on an individual basis reflecting the different circumstances that providers are in. These principles are to be reviewed at the end of June 2020.
38. A key concern is that staff sickness or caring responsibilities may mean that providers have concerns about their workforce capacity. A pool of Council staff has been created who have

undertaken training in key aspects of care and we have the ability to redeploy staff to support services that are struggling. This has not been required thus far.

Managing capacity in frontline services

39. Given the potential for staff to be away from work or for demand to increase significantly, action has been undertaken to further develop processes to assess the capacity of frontline teams to deliver effective services under the Coronavirus Act. Understanding this capacity will assist decision making around if, and when, to implement Care Act Easements.
40. Group Managers undertook an initial deployment exercise to align operational social care colleagues to the emergency response operating model. This in conjunction with a Council wide skills audit has allowed the department to understand how best to mobilise colleagues within the Department to provide additional resource for critical front-line services and deploy staff accordingly.
41. On 26th March, ASCPH launched a recruitment campaign which aimed to recruit more than 100 social care and support workers to work flexibly around the County providing vital social care to older and disabled people in a range of roles. The closing date for the advert was 30th April. As at 1st May, 282 residents had applied. So far 225 candidates have been interviewed by telephone. From these, 182 have accepted an offer to join the Department's supply register, and recruitment checks are being processed. 34 people have already commenced work across the Department's home based care and residential care teams, including the newly reopened Bishops Court in Ollerton.
42. 13 former Adult Social Care colleagues have re-joined the Council on a temporary basis. Two additional care workers have also been sourced through Reed, the Council's managed service provider.

Support for Vulnerable Children and Families including Schools

Early Years, School and College Settings

43. The government announced that schools would close from the 23rd March 2020 but would still provide places for vulnerable children or children whose parents or guardians are key workers. The vast majority of schools in Nottinghamshire have remained open for these children. Some schools have relocated pupils and teaching staff to nearby 'Hubs' – groups of schools which have been supported to work together to ensure all eligible children have a school place.
44. Nottinghamshire's special schools are working together to ensure that provision is available for children and young people with an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan. They are providing support to local schools and services and have also used the hub model with several schools working together on the same site. Special School Leaders are working closely with health and social care partners to identify and support their most vulnerable pupils, who they visit at home.
45. On 30th April 2020, the Secretary of State issued a notice to be in force from 1st May to 31st May 2020 to modify the duty in section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to secure special educational provision and health care provision in accordance with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans. The notice means that local authorities and health bodies must use

'reasonable endeavours' to discharge their duties, considering for each child and young person with an EHC plan what they can reasonably provide in the circumstances. Additionally, from 1st May to 25th September 2020 statutory timescales for EHC needs assessments and plans have been modified. Where it is not reasonably practicable to conclude an action within the statutory timescale because of COVID-19, the local authority will not be penalised but will have to complete the process as soon as reasonably practicable. The implications of these easements are currently being considered by the Department for Children and Families.

46. Staff from the Education Improvement Service, Partnership, and Fair Access teams have been organised into COVID-19 Crisis Locality Teams, supporting Headteachers and negotiating school places for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers.
47. The number of pupils attending school has varied. A snapshot during term time on the 30th April, shows that 3,071 children attended school; 2,279 were children of key workers; 853 were vulnerable children. Of the vulnerable cohort, 441 children had a social worker and 142 children had an EHC plan. The actual number is likely to be higher, due to not all schools returning data.
48. Preliminary data for Nottinghamshire suggests that a higher proportion of vulnerable children may be attending school in the County than the national average and the number has increased since the start of the summer term. However, a significant number of vulnerable children are not in school. Work continues between schools and local authority services to contact these children and assess their welfare. The number of vulnerable children seen by schools has varied.
49. Many schools have developed their practice in order to support vulnerable families. This has included delivering free school meals and regularly contacting or visiting children they consider most vulnerable. School leaders have worked together to ensure that free school meals were distributed and/or collected by families who needed them.
50. £300,000 of funding from Nottinghamshire County Council was allocated to Ofsted-registered Early Years settings to enable them to continue to provide free childcare for critical workers who currently access a funded place. On the snapshot date of 1st April, approximately 638 early years settings were open providing childcare to 1,270 children of keyworkers and 261 vulnerable children.
51. Nottinghamshire's two main Further Education (FE) institutions, Vision West Nottinghamshire and Portland College, remain open for vulnerable young people and those from key worker families. Portland College ran an Easter Holiday Club and extended an invitation to learners from other FE settings. The Rotherham North Nottinghamshire group likewise has open facilities in Bassetlaw and Nottingham College has learners attending the specialist Arthur Mee Centre in Stapleford. Numbers attending are small and quite fluid as individual circumstances change. Officers are working closely with the sector to ensure that robust risk assessment processes are in place and the most vulnerable young people identified and supported.
52. An award from The Lord-Lieutenant, supported by Nottinghamshire County Council has been made available to all children and young people in Nottinghamshire. The initiative is called #ThankOurChildren and is also endorsed by partners including Nottinghamshire Police, Fire

and Rescue Service and NHS organisations. It is receiving widespread support from schools, children and their families, members of Parliament and the UK Youth Parliament.

Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families

53. All families receiving early help or social work support have been risk-assessed to determine the level of support required. Risk levels will determine whether visits are face-to-face or via phone/videoconference. All families are receiving at least weekly contact.
54. There have been no significant issues in terms of staff absence, many staff are working remotely. There has been a flexible use of staff usually deployed within universal services, including Youth Workers and Children's Centre Workers, to support vulnerable children, young people and families to ensure that critical services continue. Robust arrangements are in place to monitor staffing levels and agree where necessary the emergency deployment of staff.
55. There has been a significant decrease in Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub enquiries and resulting social work assessments. There has also been a corresponding decrease in requests for early help support. However, this has not resulted in major changes to children on plans, with a slight decrease in numbers of children in need and an increase in children on child protection plans since schools closed. The number of children in care has increased slightly during the lockdown period.
56. The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 came into force on 24th April. The Regulations temporarily amend 10 sets of secondary legislation relating to children's social care to support services manage the coronavirus outbreak. The changes are intended to support services to try and manage the increased pressure on children's social care and cases of staff and carer shortages arising from illness due to coronavirus. The Children and Families Department have not enacted the available easements. Instead, the expectation is that it is "business as usual" and the easements will be considered as required, dependent on service capacity and levels of risk experienced within services.
57. One area where there is potential for easements to be considered is in respect of needing to increase the number of available foster carers. This relates to the significant prospect of hidden harm being uncovered at the end of lock down period and therefore more children potentially needing local authority care. The amendments to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) remove the requirement for temporary foster carers to be a 'connected person' to a child. i.e. a relative, friend or other person connected to the child, therefore permitting the recruitment of "non connected" volunteer temporary foster carers. Should the Department assess that this easement is required, this decision will be taken by the Corporate Director for Children and Families, in consultation with the Chair of the Children and Young People' Committee.

Community Support and Resilience

58. The Humanitarian Assistance Group, chaired by the County Council's Corporate Director for Place, was set up as part of the LRF response to the crisis with key local partners in district councils, Nottingham City Council, Police, Red Cross and health to ensure that there is a co-ordinated response to anyone who is isolated or vulnerable and in need of support due to Coronavirus restrictions.

Community Support Hub

59. Nottinghamshire Coronavirus Community Support Hub went live on 23rd March and is accessible over the phone, via the Council website or the My Notts app. The Hub provides a real-time online database, accessible to all partners, which enables residents in need of support to input their postcode and requirements and be 'served up' with a list of local groups and organisations able to meet those needs. The aim being that those with less complex needs could 'self-serve', and find their own support, without the need for further help.
60. Since launching the website has been receiving in the region of 1000 hits a day. The Hub is able to connect people to support with access to food, medicines and other practical and wellbeing support. Where matches for help cannot be immediately made, the request is passed onto district or borough partners who use their knowledge to find support for the person requesting it. As at 21st April, 506 requests for support had been referred through the database for districts to directly action using volunteer support, with all being responded to.
61. To ensure a joined-up approach, where people have approached the Hub who are already open to Adult Social Care or may have care and support needs, the online search tool refers their enquiry to the Customer Service Centre to ensure their needs continue to be met and any increased needs can be picked up and responded to.
62. A key role played by the Hub is in supporting the Government's Shielded programme to protect and support clinically extremely vulnerable people. The NHS has identified in the region of 1.5 million people across the country and contacted each directly. Details of those people are shared daily with the Nottinghamshire Community Response Hub and our Customer Service Centre have been in regular contact with those people in the shielded cohort who need support. There are over 22,000 Extremely Vulnerable People in Nottinghamshire, nearly 5,000 of which are receiving support from the Government and local scheme.
63. The coronavirus emergency has led to an unparalleled level of support from community organisations and individuals, which has been essential in enabling the Community Hub to operate and effectively support individuals and households in need of help. A longer-term objective is to take the unprecedented opportunity that has occurred to try and retain as much as possible of the new volunteer capacity that has come forward to build new relationships between the Council, communities, volunteers and the voluntary/community sector.

Food Supply Group

64. A Food Supply Group was also established under the LRF structure and includes district and borough partners. This group has worked to ensure that residents classed as extremely vulnerable and needing to shield have access to a sustainable food supply during their self-isolation, including supplying food parcels to those with limited or no financial means. The Food Supply Group has also worked to support current food bank provision and improve access to food supplies for people who are self-isolating.

Nottinghamshire Community Fund

65. Further to Policy Committee's approval on 18th March of a £1million revenue fund to support the response of communities to the coronavirus, the Nottinghamshire Community Fund was launched on 31st March. The fund, managed by the Council's Communities Team, is available

to local charities and community organisations that are delivering essential services to vulnerable residents impacted by COVID-19, including access to food, medicines and support with well-being. In the first three weeks of the Fund's operation the Council made 118 awards to a value of £323,134.

66. The Community and Voluntary Sector have been a crucial partner in responding to the coronavirus emergency and will continue to play a vital role in the recovery phase. Many community organisations will have been adversely affected by the crisis and a piece of work will be undertaken to assess the financial resilience of the Community and Voluntary Sector going forward.

Support for Business and the Local Economy

67. Nottinghamshire businesses have experienced periods of great disruption before. However, the current coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency is eclipsing anything seen in recent decades. During the COVID period, key aspects of the local and national economy will have been significantly affected.
68. Work is being undertaken by the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2 LEP) to understand the full impact on local businesses and the economy. An initial survey revealed that 97% of businesses reported that they had been impacted by the pandemic. Anecdotal evidence from DWP officials suggests that there has been a five-fold increase in the numbers of new Universal Credit claimants since February, with the largest numbers being in Ashfield, Mansfield and Bassetlaw.
69. The local response is being led D2N2 LEP. A 'hub' has been created to co-ordinate partner responses including the Growth Hub, East Midlands Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and Confederation of British Industry. Local intelligence from the hub is fed back to the local representative of Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to identify gaps in provision. The LEP continues to work closely with the local authorities to co-ordinate practical support and feed information into the Local Resilience Forum Finance cell.
70. D2N2 LEP has established a Redeployment Triage Service in partnership with the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) and the Council's (part-owned) Futures Group. This service will match those recently made redundant with new work in sectors experiencing increased employment demand and engage with employers needing to make redundancies to ensure a smooth transition for employees into new work <http://www.d2n2lep.org/TriageService>.
71. D2N2 has contributed to the PPE4NHS campaign and has asked businesses across the region to donate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the fight against Coronavirus <http://www.d2n2lep.org/PPE4NHS>.
72. The distribution of the government Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) scheme and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) has been the responsibility of district and borough Councils. As of 19th April 2020, 44% of those eligible to receive a grant had received payment. Out of a total £155,756,000 of Government support available for local businesses, over £86,795,000 has now been paid out by district and borough partners.

73. Discussions are underway about the possibility of redeploying funding to support the economic impact of COVID-19 notably by possible use of the ESIF reserve fund, unallocated Growing Places Fund (GPF) and future Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies.

74. The Council's Growth and Economic Development team, in collaboration with the districts and partners are preparing a recovery/renewal plan in co-ordination with the LRF whilst we await further information from Government about the national programme of economic recovery.

Corporate Resilience

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

75. The new ways of working made necessary by COVID-19 have resulted in a number of pressures on our ICT systems. Officers have worked hard over a number of weeks, improving resilience and access to new ICT applications.

76. The roll-out of the Microsoft Teams application, that had been planned before the COVID-19 emergency, has been accelerated to allow dispersed staff to work collaboratively with their colleagues. The Microsoft Teams application is now installed on all devices, meeting the needs of all staff, including the acute needs of colleagues working on the COVID-19 emergency.

77. The number of staff working from home or remote locations increased rapidly to over 4,000, putting strain on the access point into the Council's ICT network. Although there were failover systems in place the volume of traffic caused issues for all users. Consequently, ICT colleagues moved all Microsoft and Skype for Business traffic off the Council network and thereby improved performance. Additional external capacity was also built, and a number of users were transferred to balance the load through two routes onto the Council's network.

78. The roll-out programme for the replacement of smartphones across the Council was reviewed and reprioritised. The programme will continue at a renewed pace. WhatsApp has been made available on the app store for the new smartphones to provide further communication channels for employees. This will also be used by specific areas of the Council that communicate with younger people who use WhatsApp as their main means of text and video communication.

Workforce

79. Vital to the ability of the Council to focus its efforts on delivering services differently and protecting the most vulnerable has been the willingness of the Council's workforce to adapt and respond to a fast-changing environment.

80. A skills audit has been undertaken of Council employees and colleagues in Arc, Inspire and Via to inform an emergency deployment process. This has also involved the development of a range of basic training packages to ensure colleagues are adequately prepared to undertake a range of different duties to assist with maintaining capacity in number of critical services.

81. A suite of guidance and support measures have been developed, adapted and extended to ensure employees and their managers have the appropriate information and support to make the necessary changes required in our response to the COVID-19 emergency. This covers

the translation of nationally produced guidance into locally applicable processes and an expanded employee health and well-being support package.

82. The Council has shared information and materials with partner organisations including District and Borough Councils, schools and academies and responded to external approaches for advice and guidance where appropriate. This has been reciprocated and has enabled local employers to share information, avoid duplication of effort and wherever possible present a consistent approach across the county.
83. These efforts have meant that we have been able to present a “whole Council” response with the vast majority of people playing an important part in response to the current emergency and with around 82% of County Council employees remaining available to work in their current or in a changed capacity.
84. Regular engagement and communication has been maintained with the recognised Trade Unions who have remained supportive and helpful in recognising the need to do things differently during the current crisis whilst maintaining appropriate levels of challenge regarding the health and safety of our workforce and their members.
85. Managers and teams have been advised on and provided with new ways to keep in touch during the period of the emergency, as the potential for some staff to become isolated whilst working from home has increased. Many teams have developed innovative and creative approaches to ensuring staff members are supported effectively and are able to continue to support each other. The Chief Executive has written to all staff and produced 4 staff videos to update and reassure staff and this been supported by regular bulletins, videos and webinars from senior managers, including Corporate Directors.
86. In order to further support staff during this difficult time a 24-hour counselling help line was launched which staff could access quickly and directly without management referral. A range of additional tools, information, training and support on mental health issues has been made available to staff to supplement the existing materials. This includes signposting staff to new materials as they are being developed by organisations such as Mind and other organisations specialising in this field. Particular attention is being paid to supporting staff with bereavement, in either a personal or work context, with additional tools and materials. A webinar is currently being developed on this subject.

Communications and Marketing

87. As part of its communications plan to support the council's response to the outbreak, communications have been developed to ensure that the council's stakeholders – residents, employees, members and partners - are kept fully informed about services and changes that affect them and their families directly or to support them by sharing how they can access trusted local and national information, practical support and advice. The Council has also highlighted and shared across all its channels, positive news about individuals, groups and communities supporting others at this time. This is not limited to but has included:
 - social media: publishing updates and stories from the Council and guidance from trusted sources, as well as public celebrating staff continuing to work on the front line. This has led to increased levels of positive engagement with our residents, and the overall audience on all our main social media channels has greatly increased.

- creating the Coronavirus web landing page (nottinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus) which links to other related pages. This has been recognised nationally as an example of best practice.
- the launch of the online 'Community Hub'.
- an email blast to all bulletin subscribers which led to huge engagement and 28,608 people signing up to a new coronavirus bulletin.
- 167 lamppost banners across the county carrying the 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives' message, using the government design to build recognition and reinforce the message.
- support to the campaign to recruit temporary relief social care workers which has resulted in 265 applicants to date against an original target of 100.
- 'pulling together notts' campaign, showcasing examples of how schools are working together to support children, parents and the community (www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/pullingtogethernotts).
- 'Thank You Care Workers' posters produced and sent to all councillors and shared on social media for residents to download and display in their windows. This has also been made into a "mega banner" outside County Hall.
- maintaining communication with members and the workforce through the crisis to keep them informed and support the shift to remote working.

Financial Implications

Initial Position

88. The Budget Report to Full Council on 27 February 2020 set out the year by year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the four years to 2023/24 as shown in the table below. It showed that although the Council could deliver a balanced budget in 2020/21 and 2021/22, further savings would be required in each of the following years to 2023/24, based on assumptions at the time.

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m
Net Budget Requirement	512.5	526.6	556.6	570.7
Financed by :				
Business Rates	116.4	118.5	120.7	123.0
Revenue Support Grant	7.0	7.1	7.1	7.1
Council Tax	355.4	367.9	380.8	394.1
Adult Social Care Precept	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1
Collection Fund Surplus / (Deficit)	0.6	-	-	-
Total Funding	512.5	526.6	541.7	557.3
Funding Shortfall	-	-	14.9	13.4
Cumulative Funding Shortfall	-	-	14.9	28.3

89. The County Council has always taken a prudent approach regarding its reserves, which are specifically set aside to meet future, or potential future, expenditure. The budget report highlighted that the Council's position was therefore relatively robust with general reserves of circa £22m forecast as at 31st March 2020.

90. Work on the closedown of the 2019/20 accounts is currently underway but the year-end position is expected to be broadly in line with the forecasts included in the February budget report.

91. The financial impact of COVID-19 on Nottinghamshire County Council has clearly significantly changed the assumptions built in to the 2020/21 budget and the key impacts are set out below.

Additional Costs and Lost Income

92. Work has been undertaken across all service areas looking at the additional costs and lost income. In many areas it is only possible to make estimates of the likely additional costs and the work is ongoing with updates being made daily as more accurate information becomes available.

93. The initial work has focused on the impact over the first 3 months of the financial year (April to June) of 2020/21, although clearly the impact is going to go on well beyond this date.

94. The figures include an estimated 50% slippage or loss of savings proposals built into the 2020/21 budget. Further work is being undertaken to review each saving proposal and to more accurately estimate the 2020/21 impact.

95. The impact of any shortfall in Council Tax and Business Rates is not currently included but is being discussed weekly with District Councils. Extrapolation of figures provided by Districts in their recent MHCLG returns indicate this could be shortfall of circa £20m. Shortfall in Business Rates collections could add a further £8m. A review of the April collection rates will be undertaken in early May.

96. The summary table below sets out the estimated additional costs by Department as at 24th April 2020.

Additional Costs by Department (22/4/20)

	£'000
ASC&H	12,690
C&F	6,750
Place	7,266
Chief Executives	6,198
Savings at risk	4,000
Total	36,904

Government Funding

97. An initial tranche of £1.6bn of additional funding was announced in March 2020. The NCC share of this was £22.3m and this was received in late March.

98. A second tranche of a further £1.6bn for Local Government was announced on 20th April. This allocation is based on a per capita basis, and there is a 65:35 split between county and district authorities. The NCC share of this is £14.6m and this is due to be received shortly.

Cashflow position

99. Significant additional costs are being incurred over and above that envisaged in the 2020/21 budget. In addition, every effort is being made to ensure suppliers are being paid early in line with Government guidance.

100. The April precept from District Councils and Business Rates payments were received in full by the due date. We have also been advised that Government Social Care grant funding due in April, May and June is due to be paid in full in April. The initial allocation of additional Government funding of £22.3m was received in March.

101. The estimated borrowing requirement for 2020/21 (identified as part of the budget in February) will be drawn down early to ensure cash balances remain high.

Council Tax

102. The February 2020 Budget Report established the amounts due from District Councils at £388m in 10 instalments. Once set these are legally binding and any delays mean that NCC can charge interest on the overdue amount. In normal circumstances Districts would pass over the scheduled amounts and any over or under collection would be corrected in the following financial year.

103. Districts have raised concerns that if there were to be a significant reduction in collection rates, they would be unable to make the payment unless they received support from Central Government. Some (but not all) Nottinghamshire Districts have flagged potential non collection of up to 10% on their recent returns to MHCLG.

104. Weekly telephone meetings are taking place with Districts Council S151 officers and it has been agreed that this issue will be comprehensively reviewed in early May once the collection rates for April are known.

Business Rates

105. Government funding has been made available to fund Business Rates Relief for certain categories of business, however there is a concern that other businesses will simply not be able to pay amounts due. Again, this is being discussed on a weekly basis with District Councils, but initial estimates are that there could be a shortfall of up to £8m in amounts due.

NCC Capital Programme

106. Early indications are that capital schemes will be delayed and hence there is a likelihood that overall scheme costs will increase. Additional costs as a result of e.g. revised working practices due to social distancing will fall to the Council. As an example, an early estimate is that costs on the Gedling Access Road may increase by up to 8%. All capital budget holders will be contacted in May to try and estimate additional costs. If the Gedling Access Road estimate is accurate then costs could rise by around 8%, which would mean an additional capital requirement of £10m. The revenue impact of this would be circa £0.5m

Social Care

107. In response to the guidance issued by Association of Directors of Adults Social Services (ADASS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) and the announcements of further money to local government, the ASCPH department is getting more and more requests to increase fees further to cover providers' additional staffing/equipment costs during this crisis. Work is ongoing to establish an appropriate payment mechanism to support providers.

Capital Flexibility

108. An element of the revenue budget is intended to be funded from capital receipts in 2020/21. If the receipts are not achieved, then additional revenue budget will need to be identified. This could be a further £4m.

Overall Financial Impact

109. The estimated extra costs, potential Council Tax and Business Rates reductions, additional capital financing and capital receipts shortfall could result in an additional budget requirement in 2020/21 of up to £70m. Funding allocated to date totals £36.9m and work will commence to identify available reserves and other cost savings that could be used to fund the extra costs.

Meetings and Decision Making

110. An operational decision was made to cancel all Committee Meetings until further notice for health and safety reasons as the situation was declared a pandemic. The Council awaited clarification from Government in the form of primary legislation that the current statutory requirements for Council meetings would be lifted to allow virtual meetings to take place and statutory guidance in the form of Regulations to confirm the details of how these would be required to operate.

111. The Coronavirus Act contains provisions conferring power on the Secretary of State to make Regulations in relation to Local Authority meetings. These powers were brought into effect from 4 April under new Regulations. These new flexibilities may only be used in relation to meetings taking place before 7 May 2021.
112. The Regulations permit “virtual” meetings to take place, where members can attend and vote remotely by electronic means. The Regulations also require that both public and press are able to hear any virtual meetings and if practicable to see them. Where members of the public are permitted to attend and speak at meetings then facilities must be available for them to hear the meeting and to contribute.
113. Work has been undertaken to explore and test the options available for virtual Committee meetings and live streaming of any meetings to ensure they are accessible by the public and press. Discussions have taken place with Group Leaders to ensure that any arrangements are pragmatic, workable, in line with the Council’s Constitution and reflect the Council’s political balance. Guidance for Committee Clerks, Chairmen and members is being developed alongside additional support to meetings from Democratic Services and ICT colleagues to assist with the technical aspects and to ensure smooth running of meetings.
114. The regulations also remove requirements to hold annual meetings within the usual statutory timescales, or at all. Consideration is being given to the practicalities of holding an annual meeting virtually by using the technology now available and being tested.
115. Work has been undertaken to review the work programmes for all Committees to identify any potential urgent and important decisions required before the summer. Where a decision is required consideration is being given to determine the most appropriate route for decision making. This includes:
- a. Utilising the existing scheme of delegation to senior officers.
 - b. Use of the Urgency Procedures set out within the Constitution which give the Chief Executive the power to take all necessary decisions in cases of urgency, following consultation with Group leaders
 - c. Consideration of whether a virtual Committee meeting is required.
116. Corporate Directors have continued to brief Committee Chairs via virtual meetings. In addition, it has been agreed that regular bulletins will be provided by Corporate Directors to all members of specific Committees to update them on the work of services within the remit of the Committee and the impact of the COVID-19 emergency on service provision to local people.
117. The Leader of the Council and senior officers have been keeping all members updated with developments in relation to the response to COVID-19 on a regular basis by email. Group Leaders have been in regular communication with their group members.

Impact on Transformation and Change

118. The impact of COVID-19 on the approach and deliverables for Transformation and Change within the Council has been driven largely by the Council’s prioritisation of support for the

community through the crisis. The Transformation and Change team have utilised their skills and experience to provide support to the leadership, management and delivery of this work, and a proportion of staff have been allocated to a number of key response initiatives. At the same time, where possible, existing strands of work are continuing.

119. As a result of this reprioritisation, and the significant load on departmental colleagues, there will be an impact on the planned Transformation and Change deliverables in the current financial year. The consequences of this will become clearer once the Council is able to take stock of the impact on its communities and services and review its plans as the year progresses.

120. Some elements of the work with external partners Newton has been put on hold as frontline staff do not have the capacity to engage with it. Newton have revised their approach to continue as much of the Phase 1 approach as possible through data analysis and 1-1 meetings with available staff, focusing largely on financial opportunities for the year ahead and the future model for Transformation and Change. In addition, they have allocated resource to support the Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure the capture of lessons learned, which will support consideration of future organisational model priorities.

Service Disruption and Closures

121. In order to adhere to government guidance on social distancing and release Council resources to support COVID-19 priorities, the following public-facing service areas are currently closed:

- Youth service premises – youth work staff are supporting young people through work to support Children's Social Care settings.
- Library services and adult and community learning – online services and resources remain available and have proved increasingly popular.
- Outdoor education services.
- Day services – whilst premises are closed, staff are supporting service users remotely and remain in contact.
- Country parks and green spaces – commercial facilities and public car parks are closed, though parks and green spaces themselves remain open and accessible to local visitors.
- Children's Centres – premises continue to offer targeted support for vulnerable children.
- Recycling Centres – this is currently under review based on latest government guidance.

Recovery

122. The Local Resilience Forum that has led the local strategic response to COVID-19 will likewise co-ordinate partner recovery efforts through its Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG). The RCG will have a number of subgroups that oversee specific areas of recovery, such as welfare, health, community and economic recovery, to address the short, medium and long-term social and economic impacts of the coronavirus emergency. The RCG will be chaired by Chris Henning, Corporate Director for Development and Growth at Nottingham City Council, with Colin Pettigrew, Corporate Director for Children and Families from the County Council as Vice-Chair.

123. Recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 is likely to be a complex and long running process that will involve many agencies and participants. This is particularly true given the uncertainty around what response will be required as and when the number of cases in the community fluctuates over the coming months.

124. At a corporate level, work to establish and deliver a Council wide “Recovery Plan” is underway. This will encompass a number of workstreams, including: -

- Safe access to premises
- Safe re-opening of the services described in paragraph 121
- Safe operation of all other Council services
- Communication of safe working practice with staff
- Governance
- Finance and resources

Other Options Considered

125. The nature of the Coronavirus emergency is such that the Council has reviewed its priorities and use of resources to address the most critical needs of Nottinghamshire’s residents. The Council must also comply with relevant Government guidance and meet its statutory duties as required during the emergency.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

126. To update members on the Council’s immediate and urgent response to the Coronavirus emergency and early planning on the recovery phase of the emergency.

Statutory and Policy Implications

127. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

128. Decisions around enabling greater remote working and virtual meetings have been taken with due consideration of maintaining data protection and information governance standards.

Financial Implications

129. These are set out in paragraphs 88 to 109 of the report.

Human Resources Implications

130. These are set out in the body of the report. The response to this emergency across the whole of the Council’s workforce has been exemplary.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

131. The safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults is at the centre of decision making around operating models in Children's and Adults services and services continue to operate with the same standards of care.

Implications for Service Users

132. While there continue to be many disruptions to services through the Council's response to COVID-19, the aim has been to maintain the welfare and safety of all services users at all times.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That members consider whether they require any further actions in relation to the issues contained within the report.
- 2) That members agree to receive further updates at subsequent Policy Committee meetings.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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0115 9773498

Constitutional Comments (HD- 30/4/2020)

133. The Council's constitution contains broad delegations in favour of all Corporate Directors to carry out all service-related operational decision making at any time. In times of emergency or disaster, there is an additional wide delegation to Corporate Directors to exercise the powers of the County Council in those circumstances, subject to reporting back to the next appropriate Committee or Council meeting. There is no requirement to consult on the use of these powers as they are designed to enable speedy and effective service responses to fast moving operational circumstances with the intention of averting danger to people as a result of the emergency events. This report sets out a summary of the actions being taken to manage the current emergency and an estimate of the potential cost consequences which may arise. Given the wide-ranging nature and extent of the impacts in this emergency, it is appropriate to report these matters to Policy Committee.

Financial Comments (KP 04/5/2020)

134. As set out in the report there are significant additional costs associated with the work being undertaken to maintain the welfare and safety of service users. There is also significant uncertainty about the final costs of the additional support being provided. Additional Government funding has been allocated to all Local Authorities, although at this stage it is not certain that all additional cost will be fully funded.

135. In order to ensure that the additional costs are carefully monitored, and that the financial position of the Council is protected, a Financial Resilience Group has been established. This group consists of all senior finance staff, key Departmental Service Directors and a representative from Legal Services. The group will monitor and update additional costs and lost income, look at the impact on approved savings proposals, identify any areas which are seeing reduced costs, review all reserves, review routine budget monitoring and assess the overall impact of these on the Councils MTFS. The group will also ensure the cashflow position of the Council is sufficient to enable additional and ongoing payments to be made.
136. The group will meet regularly and will report to senior officers and Members and will ensure monthly Government Covid 19 Delta returns to MHCLG accurately reflect the up to date position .

HR comments (GE 30/04/20)

137. These are broadly set out in the report. Effective communication with employees has been critical during this emergency. As has ongoing dialogue with the recognised Trades Unions by weekly briefings to ensure that they are up to date with developments on critical issues such as PPE and have the opportunity to raise any issues on behalf of members. Trades union colleagues have been supportive of the approach the Council has taken in responding to the emergency. The Council is also keeping its support for employees under review and has supplemented and expanded the available resources on a regular basis as the emergency as progressed. Dialogue is ongoing to continue to develop further support mechanisms for staff going forward as the Council begins to plan for recovery.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All