

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to establish a Covid Partnership Social Recovery Fund to support those Nottinghamshire residents most in need as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Information

2. During the pandemic, the Government has provided a number of funding streams to local government fund a system-wide local approach to supporting the most vulnerable. As the UK moves from response to recovery, the Government continues to use local systems to provide responses to tackle COVID-19 and its impacts.
3. In Nottinghamshire, the system approach to supporting all those in need of practical support, (such as access to food, medicines etc), including the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, has been delivered in partnership through the Nottinghamshire Coronavirus Community Support Hub, which has seen all local Councils, health and emergency service partners and the voluntary and community sector come together to support vulnerable communities and residents.
4. The pandemic has impacted upon a range of socio-economic issues such as social mobility, educational attainment, mental health, health, employment and economic growth, creating a knock-on effect of reduced opportunities and resources. Officers have therefore been considering a reshaped partnership approach to recovering from COVID-19 and how Nottinghamshire's partnerships can best use the available Government funds.

Nottinghamshire Community Hub

5. The Hub is a virtual network of partners, working to meet the ever-evolving duties Government places on the statutory partners, and to deliver co-ordinated support to those who need it. The work has led to the development of a suite of tools and new approaches to best understand and meet the local challenges caused by the Pandemic.
6. There has been a tremendous amount of goodwill and combined effort from all partners to support the vulnerable, both in designing approaches and delivering support. This new model of partnership working maximises the differing strengths and reach of each partner, with all partners playing equal roles.
7. The Hub is currently co-ordinated and governed through the Local Resilience Forum Humanitarian Assistance Group (LRF HAG), upon which all partners are represented.

Needs Assessment

8. In January, an assessment process was commissioned by the LRF HAG to support a better understanding of the developing needs of vulnerable communities and residents, and to identify gaps in provision. As a result, 10 priority cohorts were identified:
- Hospital and community care patients ready for discharge;
 - COVID19 positive self isolators;
 - Elderly residents with dementia/frail/living alone;
 - Domestic abuse victims;
 - Residents who are digitally excluded;
 - Residents from minority ethnic groups;
 - Residents experiencing financial difficulties;
 - Younger people;
 - Residents experiencing loneliness and isolation;
 - Residents with less complex mental health needs.
9. Since these groups were originally identified, systems have already been designed and implemented regarding patients ready for discharge, whilst a new national framework and associated funding has been introduced to support those being required to self-isolate.
10. Working groups of internal and external partners have been convened regarding the remaining 8 cohorts. These groups have been tasked to better understand the needs, how the system can use existing systems and resource to best address these needs, and to work-up partnership action plans where there are gaps. This work is ongoing. As widely reported, the needs in communities caused by the pandemic are significant.
11. Two example cohorts, and the needs being identified are;
- **Domestic Abuse** - The pandemic has had a significant effect upon domestic abuse survivors and the services that support them. Survivors and their children have been at increased risk for large periods since March 2020, with limited opportunities to be safe and with a greater number of children witnessing abuse in the home. The long-term impact has not fully emerged to date. Services have provided support remotely and have identified increased complexity and need within survivors. Nottinghamshire's local helpline is expected to receive 20,000 calls in 2021. There has also been an impact on the domestic abuse workforce, who have been holding higher, more complex caseloads. Therefore, action will be required to address the short to medium term consequences of domestic abuse during the pandemic. The services and stakeholders involved in this area of work recognise the hidden nature of domestic abuse, and there is an expectation that need will increase over the next year. For covid recovery, commissioned services will need additional support to rebuild workforce resilience and ensure that they are ready and able to meet increased demand for services. Additional support will also be required to connect community services and improve the early identification of survivors and their children to ensure specialist support is offered quickly.
 - **Dementia/Frail/Living Alone** – in summer 2020, a prioritised intervention programme was delivered by partners to ensure that those residents with the most serious challenges had the support they needed in place. Out of a cohort of approximately 20,000 residents aged 70 years and older, partners contacted 10,667 of those that were most at risk. 1,227 (11%) of those contacted needed further support, which has been provided, and which has helped manage demand for statutory service support.

12. Apart from work on specific cohorts, partnership approaches are being developed regarding several other cross cutting issues. For example food supply issues have featured throughout the pandemic. Currently, partners are working on a Food Support Plan to help develop innovative and sustainable initiatives to provide all people a supply of healthy and nutritious food. Work to support foodbanks has featured throughout the pandemic, but more long term and sustainable ideas such as social supermarkets, crops drops, community gardens, and social eating clubs are being explored and introduced. More support is needed to ensure there is appropriate county wide coverage in those areas of most need.

Corporate Transformation Programmes

13. The Community Hub way of working and the strengthened cross-public/voluntary and community sector working it has fostered are seen by all partners as invaluable. By pulling together around a simple and clear purpose, operating in a 'non-precious' way to co-design solutions and pool resources, good results have been achieved.

14. The Council's transformation programmes provide the opportunity to develop further and deliver significant improvements for our residents through embedding this systems approach in its future service design and delivery model. The Covid Social Recovery Fund provides an opportunity to further this important partnership work and help prevent vulnerable members of the population reaching crisis point.

Covid Partnership Social Recovery Fund

15. This report identifies a number of cohorts and potential initiatives to meet the ongoing needs of our communities as they recover from the pandemic. The report also recognises that further work will be required to fully understand the need and develop appropriate support to our communities. As a consequence, it is planned that an initial fund of £1m is established to ensure the Council is able to react flexibly to meet needs as they arise.

16. It is proposed that the fund is used to address these developing needs and to design interventions with partners that will deliver benefits beyond the initial period of funding. The Covid Partnership Social Recovery Fund will complement the Council's Covid Recovery Framework that will be brought to Policy Committee in July.

17. This initial fund will be established utilising a combination of Council reserves and any additional government grants provided for the specific purpose of meeting the social need of our communities through the year. Future reports to Committee will include details of how the fund has been deployed, as well as any additional funding required beyond the initial £1m.

Governance

18. Detailed partnership plans are being developed regarding the potential utilisation of the funds to address the needs of specific cohorts set out in paragraph 8. Delivery of the Plans, and monitoring of impact, will be undertaken through the LRF HAG.

19. The Communities Committee of the County Council is the appropriate formal decision-making body, and as such, regular update reports on the use of the fund will be brought to this Committee.

Other Options Considered

20. None.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

21. To help address social need resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic, building on the strong partnership relationships formed as a result of the multi-agency response to the pandemic in Nottinghamshire.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. 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.

Financial Implications

23. These are set out in paragraphs 15-17.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That Committee approves the establishment of the COVID-19 Social Recovery Fund; and
- 2) That regular reports on the expenditure from this fund are brought to the Communities Committee.

Derek Higton
Service Director, Place and Communities

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mark Walker, Group Manager, Trading Standards and Communities, Tel: 0115 9772173

Constitutional Comments (LW 28/05/2021)

24. Communities Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (RWK 27/05/2021)

25. The report proposes the establishment of the COVID-19 Social Recovery Fund with an initial balance of £1 million. This initial balance will be funded from a combination of additional government grants and from the Council's reserves. Future reports to Committee will include details of how the fund has been deployed, as well as any additional funding required beyond the initial £1m.

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