
REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	18 June 2020
Subject:	The Council's Response to COVID 19 - Update
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Sean Harriss, Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Graham Henson, Leader of the Council
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Letter to Minister of State for Care - Harrow Council COVID-19: Care Home Support Package Appendix 2 – COVID Management Plan Appendix 3 – Business Support Grant Briefing

Summary and Recommendations

On 21 May 2020 Cabinet considered a report on the Council's response to COVID 19. Given the fast-changing nature of this crisis, this update provides Members with the latest situation and advice.

Recommendations: That the updates be noted and a further update be submitted to Cabinet in July 2020, if appropriate.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure that Members have the most up to date advice and information in relation to the Council's response to the COVID 19 emergency.

Strategic Context

This report to Cabinet provides an update on the ongoing strategic response that the Council is making to the Covid-19 emergency. While since the report to Cabinet last month there has remained a focus on ensuring that our critical services continue to be delivered to our residents, especially those who are most vulnerable, there has also been a requirement to respond to the changes to "lockdown." This has involved "restarting" a number of services as varied as schools, garden waste and housing and also beginning to widen the number of democratic meetings that the Council is holding. This phase of the emergency is set to increase in pace and complexity with the reopening of non-essential retail on 15 June, a widening of the cohort of children set to attend school and the gradual reopening of some of the Council's own buildings.

As well as dealing with the emergency and beginning to restart services after lockdown, the Council has continued to be focussed on delivering "new services" as part of our strategic response. Firstly, there has continued to be a significant focus on the Community Hub which has provided services both to the Shielded Cohort and to other vulnerable residents who are in need of support. This activity has continued to be delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector.

The second major area of focus has been the delivery of Business Grants. This has proved to be particularly challenging due to both a highly complex business base and challenges with council capacity and IT. Through a very strong focus and very high levels of commitment from the staff working on the Grants the position has improved significantly over the past month with circa 95% of grants paid out to eligible businesses. This has meant that the Council is in the top quartile of London Boroughs.

A further key area that the Council has been engaged in responding to since the last report has been the local element of Test, Track, Trace and Isolate which is a vital component of the strategy for lifting lockdown and suppressing the spread of Covid-19. The development of our local capacity to support the delivery of this key task has been a major focus and local outbreak management plans are being put in place.

During the past month there has also been a strong focus on our work to support our Care Homes in conjunction with NHS colleagues both in North West London and Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group and this significant

and vitally important work was subject to a return made to Government on 29 May. The importance of the strategic and operational relationship with the NHS has been a particular focus both in respect of restoring services and preparing for future waves of Covid-19. This community based “out of hospital” work is a key priority for the Council going forward.

The financial pressure that the Council faces from Covid-19 remains of the highest strategic concern. Although emergency Government funding of £13.1m has been made available to date this will fall a long way short of the estimated additional costs and loss of income that the Council will face. It is hoped that the next few weeks will bring much needed clarity in respect of the Council’s finances both for the current financial year and the medium term given the long lasting impact of Covid-19 on the Council’s finances.

The final area of increased focus and priority since the last report to Cabinet has been planning for medium to long-term recovery. It is clear that there will be a significant economic downturn that will impact on both local residents and businesses and that services and our broader community leadership role will need to adapt to the “new normal” of a Covid-19 world. This work has started both with local authority partners across the West London Alliance and with our key partners in all sectors in Harrow. The vehicle for driving this work will be the draft borough plan which will need to be developed and engaged on in the context of Covid-19 recovery. It is anticipated that the first phase of this work will be reported through to Cabinet at its meeting in July.

It is important to recognise the ongoing excellent work that Council staff at all levels are playing in response to both the emergency and the work to restore services as lockdown is eased. Many staff continue to work extended hours over an six or seven day period and it is through their dedication and commitment that the Council’s response has been so effective. It is also important to be aware that this level of activity is likely to be the norm for an extended period and as such it is important for this to be recognised by Cabinet and CSB.

The remainder of this report updates Members in terms of the activities of service areas as follows:-

- Schools and School Admission Appeals;
- Children’s Social Care;
- Adults Social Care;
- Town Centre reopening plan and parks management;
- Housing;
- Harrow Strategic Development Partner;
- Household Waste and Recycling Centre;
- Parking Enforcement;
- Special Needs Transport;
- Community Hub;
- Registration Services
- Grants to Small Businesses;
- Discretionary Business Grants;

The report also details the preparations for both Test, Track and Trace and the reopening of the Civic Centre, and advises on the current budget position and the plans for recovery.

UPDATE ON SERVICES

People Services Directorate

Schools

Following the Government's announcement that nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children should return to school from 1 June 2020, the Council has supported School Governing bodies and School Leadership teams to ensure that they are COVID ready in terms of social distancing and compliance with Department of Education [DfE] and Public Health [PHE] Guidance. This builds on the work that schools have already done in maintaining safe daily schooling for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children since the pandemic took hold in mid-March 2020.

On 4 June 2020, Directors from the Council held a virtual meeting with Head Teachers to facilitate a Question and Answer session with the Director of Public Health to explain and help apply the Government Guidance in schools and early years settings; including outlining the local outbreak plans that are being established to strengthen test, track and trace in the Borough. This support and advice was well received and is indicative of the strong partnership that is in place between Harrow's community of schools and the Council.

Regular weekly returns are being made to the Department for Education to monitor the progress of the wider opening of schools in the borough. Early indications suggest that there has been a definite increase in the numbers of children coming to school in these year groups. The figures produced by the DfE on 9 June for Harrow showed **3,073** children attending all settings, which is a threefold increase on numbers prior to 1 June, when wider opening was requested by the Government.

The table below shows the percentage of schools that have opened by year group each week since the 1st June.

Schools	Total	Week beginning					
		1st June		8th June		15th June	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Nurseries	29	7	24%	11	38%	14	48%
Reception	40	16	40%	25	63%	32	80%
Year 1	40	13	33%	29	73%	36	90%
Year 6	39	21	54%	26	67%	35	90%

It is anticipated that a large majority [97%] of all primary schools in the Borough [inclusive of academies and community maintained schools] will have widened their opening to children by the end of June 2020.

Irrespective of whether schools will open even wider over the next two months, the Council will continue to work with schools to support vulnerable children and learners through the summer months, in preparation for the new school term in September 2020. The early support offer for families includes a variety of school readiness programmes, which are already planned for the summer months; delivered via Children Centres both virtual and bespoke, in line with social distancing requirements.

Due to the Covid emergency, it was not possible to present the Schools Standards and Effectiveness report to Cabinet in March 2020, which summarises the results of Harrow schools in the last academic year, ending in the summer of 2019. This information report does demonstrate the consistent quality of education across Harrow schools.

In the academic year 2018- 2019, the proportion of schools in Harrow that are at least good or outstanding on Ofsted criteria is 93%. This includes all four special schools (100% outstanding) and secondary schools (92% good or outstanding). The proportion of good and outstanding schools in Harrow remains well above the national average (86%) in England with 23 Harrow schools (43%) currently outstanding.

The trend of strong performance in relation to key national benchmarks was improved upon again in 2018-19.

Against this backdrop, it is clear that our families in Harrow do value our schools, and for this reason, the Local Authority has continued to support schools to open more widely, so that the access to good education can continue to be maximised.

School Admission Appeals

At present, School Admission Appeals cannot safely be held in person, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures put in place by the Government. The newly implemented 2020 Regulations recognise that (in light of the Covid-19 pandemic) the arrangements for school admission appeals had to change, and the new legislation introduces some flexibility to help facilitate that. However, it should be noted that the new Regulations are temporary and are currently due to expire in February 2021.

Harrow has an ongoing obligation to ensure appeals continue to be heard despite school and workplace closures. As such, the options for Harrow Council in holding these appeals are:

- 1) By virtual hearings (e.g. carrying out the appeal through video or telephone conferencing);
- 2) Where virtual hearings are not possible, by written submission only; or
- 3) A combination of the above.

Admission authorities should clearly set out to all parties to an appeal how the appeals process will be carried out, including how appeals will be conducted and the expected timescales for each part of the process.

Officers are proceeding on the model set out in option 3 but will keep this under review. School admission appeals will be heard using a combination of written submissions and the use of telephone (rather than video) conferencing.

Children's Social Care

Staffing levels have been sustained at 80-90% of the workforce, whilst continuing to deliver a seven day a week service. There has been a steady increase in the type of referrals that are normally associated with child protection and child-in need services, such as exposure to parental domestic abuse, parental substance abuse and parental mental ill-health.

As lockdown restrictions are relaxed, and schools open more widely, it is anticipated that the hidden harms of abusive family life, not easily observed during the pandemic will now emerge. Children's services are ready to mobilise further as that occurs.

For looked after children, placements have remained generally stable due to the excellent work of our foster carers and social work teams; similarly with our care leavers. During the pandemic, there have been far fewer unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving through the pan London rota. This may change once travel restrictions begin to be lifted later in the summer, but for now we have sufficient capacity to cope with placement demands.

The Youth Offending Team has remained proactive in visiting young people subject to court orders or on the cusp of entering the youth justice system. The Youth Offending Partnership Board has continued to oversee local youth activity trends and has seen a small increase of serious incidents of youth violence as lockdown is relaxed.

Adults Social Care

On 14 May 2020, the Council received a letter from the Minister of State for Care Helen Whately MP in relation to the Care Home Support Package. The Council's response is published on the Harrow website.

www.harrow.gov.uk/carehomesupport

Harrow has 56 registered care homes within its boundary, with well over a 1,000 beds. Though many of these homes are not commissioned by the Council, we have been given a responsibility [with partners] , to support these providers to deal comprehensively with the Covid pandemic and control future infection, to minimise the impact on our vulnerable residents and support the courageous staff working in this sector.

In developing this response to the Minister, Harrow Council has engaged with primary care networks, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), local care providers, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Local Resilience Forum chairs, as well as Healthwatch, other statutory partners and local VCS/Advocacy services. This demonstrates the need for an ongoing,

integrated approach to this Support Plan which is reflected in the submission to the Minister.

At the heart of this submission is a recognition that our social care teams, and the care provider sector as a whole, deserves parity of esteem with our NHS Health providers; a point emphasised by our Chief Executive, in his covering letter to the Minister (Appendix 1).

The Care Home Support Plan for Harrow now in place has made use of comprehensive local testing facilities for all care home staff and residents, and will give us a firm foundation for dealing with any further spikes or local outbreaks of the virus until such time as a vaccine is found.

Out of Hospital Recovery Plan

Prior to the pandemic, the Harrow Health and Care Partnership had embarked on a programme of integration with statutory providers, based on close alignment with the newly formed primary care networks [GP networks] and the voluntary sector, at a local level.

The collaboration required across the Health and care system in North West London to respond to the Covid pandemic has quickened the progress towards an integrated care partnership; which is Borough based. The Borough recovery from the pandemic is now being led by the Harrow Health and Care Executive but linked to the work across North West London.

An Out of Hospital [OOH] plan has been developed which captures the priority actions needed to address any second wave of the virus; with a particular focus on mitigating the impact on the BAME community.

The plan also recognises that there are likely to be “waves of need” which emerge within the local community as a result of lockdown; particularly in relation to the mental health of our citizens, both in Children and Adult services. This integrated approach will be required to ensure that the pathways out of hospital for Health and social care are seamless for our vulnerable citizens.

Community Directorate

Town Centre reopening plan and parks management

Around 60% of premises in the District Centres and Harrow Town Centre will be able to open from 15 June 2020. Harrow Council has been awarded £221,203 from the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund to support the reopening of those places. A series of measures have been planned and costed to utilise this fund to enable social distancing and the movement of shoppers within those centres. In tandem with this, a capital programme has been developed to improve walking and cycle routes into those centres to shift people from public transport and cars.

An application for Streetspace funds has been submitted to Transport for London (TFL). That capital programme will be enhanced by funds from Harrow's High Street Fund to increase the number of people walking and cycling to those centres. Communications will be through HA1BID, Harrow Council Business Newsletter, with local traders groups and the Commonplace website.

The Public and Community Protection team is assessing options to widen pavements. They are working with Business Improvement District (BID), Estates and Highways to set up a system in the town centre to ensure public safety. They are also reviewing restrictions on off sales for licensing in place under Government guidance.

Appendix 2 (Covid Management Plan) contains the town centre re-opening briefing document. This includes the Harrow Town Centre action plan.

Parks

With the relaxation of lockdown restrictions, all the boroughs parks are open apart from outdoor gyms and playgrounds which remain prohibited under law. Basketball courts have remained shut but all tennis courts are now open apart from Pinner Village as this would mean opening the playground.

Appendix 2 (Covid Management Plan) details the parks plan and the business opening plan.

Housing

Asset Management arrangements are being discussed with Access Harrow around resourcing in the contact centre for reporting repairs and requests for maintenance and also making greater use of the Housing Portal for non-urgent repairs. We will then formally return the service to near normal levels. Some non-urgent repairs that residents reported have already been delivered.

With the exception of one, all planned investment works contracts have now returned to site with appropriate risk assessments etc. Programme planning, procurement and mobilisation are continuing.

In terms of aids and adaptations, both DGFs and Council Adaptations programmes have resumed. Timeframes are understandably longer to ensure that the appropriate safety measures to protect our customers, staff and contractors are in place.

The Housing Needs service continues to house everyone who is homeless on the day, regardless of vulnerability. Currently 22 rough sleepers are being housed in emergency accommodation and officers are working towards offering them better longer term housing solutions. All families with children have been moved out of shared emergency accommodation.

The advertising of social housing vacancies has started with both virtual viewings and most property sign-ups being dealt with on line.

The Estate Services team is operating at reduced capacity, 50-60% at the moment and although that percentage did increase it has now reduced again. All other staff are operational from home.

Rent arrears have increased by £113k since the lockdown (+18%). We will not be able to assess the full impact of arrears on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) until all the Universal Credit applications are processed which takes 5 - 6 weeks. We will have a clearer understanding by August 2020. The Government has recently suspended court evictions until 23 August 2020.

In terms of vulnerable residents, we currently have 15 tenants who have asked for further regular calls, and 207 calls allocated to officers where the outcome has not yet been recorded. Every week we receive new information about the shielding list; this week the changes to the shielding list has generated 239 new general needs tenants that need a call. Other housing volunteers are entering the personal data onto Northgate. It is anticipated that locally the food parcels from the Harrow Community Hub might be needed until Christmas.

Housing Regeneration is operating a normal service with all contractors now back on site and projects being progressed. However, Covid-19 has resulted in projects being delayed with many uncertainties about submission of planning applications due to needing a different approach to consultation that respects social distancing etc, as well as future project build costs. As a result we do not anticipate many new schemes getting on site in 2020/21.

The asbestos soft strip of Grange Farm Phase 1 is complete and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have been notified of the final works to remove the remaining asbestos. Once the HSE has approved the works, this will commence in preparation for demolition. The discovery of the additional asbestos has delayed the project.

The Property Acquisition programme has now resumed with viewings and offers being made on ex council properties.

Fire Risk Assessments and Asbestos surveys of our existing housing stock are now back to normal service.

Harrow Strategic Development Partner Update (HSDP)

The procurement of the HSDP was paused due to the London move to delivering priority services only in light of the Covid-19 and the need for resources to focus on the emergency response.

The current position is that the HSDP procurement process has recommenced and is currently in the evaluation and moderation of tenders stage.

Household Waste & Recycling Centre (HWRC)

Following the reopening of the Centre on 18 May 2020, vehicles are allowed to use the upper level. We introduced a postcode system to stagger the usage.

Due to social distancing we are only using 9 out of the 13 bays available, and all waste is placed through the opening behind the car to maintain social distancing.

From 15 June 2020 the plan is to return to Business as Usual and separate the waste (e.g. for recycling materials). In order to maintain social distancing, only 6 cars will be allowed on the upper level for separation of the waste to take place.

Currently, due to the volume of traffic and the amount of waste being brought to the site, trade waste is not accepted but we will look to introduce over the next month.

Parking Enforcement

As part of both focusing staff resources on priority tasks and recognising the impact of lockdown on residents, a revised temporary strategy for parking enforcement was adopted. With the relaxation of lockdown and the re-opening of schools and residents returning to work we are now moving parking to the next phase.

We will continue to monitor moving traffic offences and bus lane enforcement from our CCTV control room. The number of Civil Enforcement Officers on street patrols is being stepped up to cover the increase in traffic to monitor waiting/loading restrictions, Pay & Display parking and dropped kerb obstructions.

CCTV cars are being redeployed on a rota basis to monitor school keep clear markings at primary schools. The agreement not to enforce controlled parking zones will remain under review.

Special Needs Transport (SNT)

We have around 2,000 clients between Harrow and Brent. Social distancing guidance means we can currently only accommodate 2 clients per bus and 1 per MPV and hence current capacity is around 20%. We also have around 40 operatives isolating.

However, SNT demand remains low with less than 5% clients requiring transport so this is being accommodated. We expect this to significantly increase in September by which time, if the social distancing and isolating rules have not been relaxed, we will be unable to accommodate demand.

The MOT service is currently closed, initially due to lockdown and currently due to the planned relocation of MOT equipment to a new depot building.

Resources Directorate

Community Hub

The Community Hub was set up in conjunction with the Voluntary Sector primarily to support the 13,000 shielded residents within Harrow then expanded to assist all vulnerable residents who are affected by Coronavirus and need urgent help. The aim of the service is to provide assistance in arranging food, essentials and medication, give financial advice to those facing hardship, offer emotional support and reassurance where required and to signpost those in medical need.

Throughout April and May, the Service was open seven days a week and the team called out to 9,737 residents and responded to 4,587 inbound calls. Further advice and guidance is available in a dedicated section of our website which received 140,580 visits throughout the same period.

Registration Services

Guidance has been received from the General Register Office that Registration Services in England are now permitted to open for registration purposes, which includes birth registration and giving of notice of marriage. As a result of this recent guidance, appropriate arrangements are now being put in place and advice has been sought from the Director of Public Health with a view to the service re-opening at the beginning of July 2020. No guidance has been issued regarding the conduct of marriages, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies.

Officers are working to implement safe ways of working whilst observing social distancing including the use of PPE, screens, timetabling of appointments/attendance and it is hoped that the team will be ready to take routine notices by the end of the month. The plans to re-open the Registrars' Office will need to take account of the use of the entrance by staff generally to access the Civic Centre as this will be the route into the building. Clients may be asked to stay in their car until one of the team call them to come straight to the office to ensure that there is no queuing /bunching in the reception/ entrance area. The current plans are designed to work at other locations within the Civic Centre, such as the Committee Rooms, or in other (Council) buildings. Another option would be to move Registrars to Headstone Manor.

Officers are currently planning for the possibility of restarting of marriage ceremonies when permitted by the Government.

Grants to Small Business

Officers across various teams in the Council continue to work long-hours and weekends to process and distribute the Small Business and Retail, Hospitality & Leisure grants. The Government has allocated £42.2m to the Council to implement its Grants to Small Business Scheme. All qualifying small businesses within the borough, dependent upon their rateable value, are entitled to a grant of either £10k or £25k. As at 5 June 2020, the Council has received 2,332 applications (after duplications and rejections) of which 1,986

have been paid totalling £30.5m. The Council is estimating to pay 2,050 eligible applications therefore payments are 96.8% of estimated eligibility. There is a balance of 346 grants at 5 June and the current estimate is that these will be resolved (paid or classed as not eligible) by the third week of June.

The brief at Appendix 3 was recently sent out to Councillors and local MPs to provide background to the challenges Harrow Council has encountered in distributing the grants and the approach the Council is taking. In summary, we have had a slow start due to the relatively small size of our team, the proportionally large number of eligible businesses and the lack of good data (and technology). We have made great strides and, with the hard work of the team, are now making good progress. It was good to see that in the latest Government League table on the amount of grant that had been distributed, Harrow Council are now near the top of the table for London Boroughs and almost in the top quartile for all Councils. Our slow start has now turned into a fast finish.

Discretionary Business Grants

The Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund was launched by the government to support small businesses and charities that did not qualify for the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Fund. The discretionary fund allocation to Harrow was sufficient to support only a small number of businesses. Harrow Council's funding criteria was developed to maximise economic impact and be in line with government guidance. In this respect it prioritises the following type of business

- Small business in shared offices or other flexible workspaces,
- Regular market traders with fixed building costs, such as rent, who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- Charity with a property in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

In order to maximise the impact of the grant, £10,000 is being awarded to the above if they are a Micro business, employ between two and nine people at the time of application, were trading for 12 months prior to 1 June 2020, have a Harrow trading address, have experienced a 50% loss of income as a result of Covid 19, and occupy non-residential property, or part of a property, with a rateable value or annual rent or have annual mortgage payments below £51,000.

Emergency Funding

To date the Government have announced two tranches of emergency funding to support Councils with additional expenditure incurred and the loss of income as a result of the emergency.

In late March, Central Government announced a sum of £1.6 billion available nationally. London's share was £254m of which Harrow received £6.3m.

On 28 April, the Government announced a second national sum of £1.6 billion. London's share slightly reduced to £245m of which Harrow received an increased amount of £6.8m. Therefore to date the Council has received £13.1m of emergency funding.

The Council are required to regularly report to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) the estimated impact of the emergency for 2020/21. To date the Council has reported twice to MHCLG and the submissions are summarised below:

	Submission 1 – April	Submission 2 - May
	£m	£m
Estimated additional expenditure -2020/21	11.291	14.157
Estimated loss of income – 2020/21	23.662	40.663
Total estimated impact - 2020/21	34.953	54.82
Less NNDR Rate Relief		(17)
Total estimated impact – 2020/21	34.953	37.82

Estimated additional expenditure has increased by £2.8m. This is largely due to more clarity around the cost of PPE (£750K) and temporary additional payments to care providers (£1.030m for tranches 1 & 2).

The estimated loss of income has largely remained the same at £23m after the adjustment of £17m for rate relief which will be funded by central government. Within the figure of £23m for submission 2, the position on the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates has improved by £6m with the Council estimating that collection rates will reduce by a relatively low 2%. The Council has stressed the importance of continuing to pay Council Tax to ensure vital services are maintained alongside offering support to those residents who need it. The position on sales, fees and charges has worsened by a similar sum which highlights the challenges around income collection during the pandemic and the ongoing impact into future years.

The next submission to Government is estimated to be around 19 June 2020.

Preparation for Test, Track and Trace

Contact tracing is a well-established method for controlling the transmission of conditions – for instance, it is used with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infections. The process involves a person who is infected recounting their movements and activities to build up a picture of who else might have been exposed.

This is crucial with Covid-19. The virus is highly infectious, symptoms can take several days to first appear and people may also be asymptomatic, passing the virus on without knowing they are carrying it.

The Government is developing both conventional contact tracing (using contact centres and professional staff) and a NHS Covid-19 app. The manual contact tracing scheme started on 28 May 2020, while the app has been delayed until June.

Public Health England is running the contact tracing system and is recruiting 15,000 call handlers (Tier 3) who will communicate with and give advice to contacts according to Standard Operating Procedures and scripts. Most of these people are non-clinical staff, but there will also be around 3,000 people who have medical backgrounds (Tier 2).

There is also a Tier 1 of the contact tracing service which is sub-categorised into:

a. Tier 1a – this is the national co-ordinating function and will lead on quality assurance, data science, guidelines and protocols and clinical governance.

b. Tier 1b - Health Protection Teams (HPT) and PHE Field Service Teams (FST) who will manage complex outbreaks and situations in conjunction with local authority environmental health and public health support (as they currently do). A further cohort of Tier 1b call handlers and team leaders are being recruited to the national programme. These will be qualified professionals with previous experience of public health practice at an intermediate or more senior level. They will provide surge capacity to HPT/FPTs and be responsible for managing a caseload and dealing with issues escalated up from the lower tiers. There will be an additional local authority component to Tier 1b which will address issues such as shielding, supporting vulnerable individuals/households to self-isolate and impacts on inequalities, the local economy, essential services and workforce.

A regionalised network will have an overview of the programme, review regional performance and assess wider impacts across the region. It will link into the national programme and LRFs and local authorities. For us, this will be the London Covid response Centre (LCRC) who will also take on the Tier 1b support.

Although the Tier system may seem complex, the way the contact tracing system works is fairly straightforward.

Once someone has tested positive for coronavirus, the NHS test and trace service will send them a text or email alert or call you with instructions of how to share details of people with whom they have had close, recent contact and places they have visited. For those who have been in close enough contact to warrant follow-up, the NHS test and trace service will alert them by text, email or phone call. They will be asked to log on to the NHS test and trace website, but if they can't a call handler will talk them through what they must do. They will be told to self-isolation for 14 days from their last contact with the person who has tested positive. If they develop symptoms of coronavirus, they must book a test.

Close contact means:

- having face-to-face contact with someone (less than 1 metre away)
- spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone
- travelling in a car or other small vehicle with someone (even on a short journey) or close to them on a plane

The case may be referred to local public health experts if it is complex, for example, if the person works in or have recently visited:

- a health or care setting, such as a hospital or care home
- a prison or other secure setting
- a school for people with special needs
- critical national infrastructure or areas vital for national security

Local public health experts are Public Health England staff and teams employed by LCRC. There will also be a link to us at Borough level for very complex cases.

They will also direct the isolating person to us if they need the following during the period of self-isolation:

- practical (delivering food or medicine) or social support
- support for someone they care for
- financial support

Employers are asked to support workers who are told to self-isolate and must not ask them to attend work.

Our Response

We are pulling together our plans and support to the national and regional system along with all other Boroughs. The key aspects are:

Governance

We have set up a Steering Group of Council officers and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and, through the Borough Gold, are engaging with the Police. One of our first tasks has to been to build mutual understanding of the Test & Trace system and our required response.

We do need to consider how we set up the Local Outbreak Engagement Board which brings Member oversight. It is suggested that this is done through the Health & Wellbeing Board as it has cross partner participation.

Provide political ownership and public-facing engagement and communication for outbreak response.

Engagement

A key to the success of the test & trace programme is buy-in from the public so that they willingly participate in the procedures. We do have powers we could bring to bear to enforce some of the required aspects, but it is far better to have willing resident and businesses.

Developing understanding through good engagement with communities and individuals is therefore critical. We have begun to identify the key groups of people (especially those who will be 'hard to reach') and discuss with community (through initial talks with HASVO) and voluntary sector. These 'channels' are also important as they are more likely to be successful in convincing people and communities that the test & trace system is not a 'big-brother watching you' initiative as well as explaining what can be seen as a complex process.

We are also planning a more general communications campaign but are awaiting further guidance from Government.

It is hoped Members will play a key role in community engagement, spreading messages and getting feedback.

Outbreak management plans

Our first key task has been to develop local outbreak management plans for different scenarios (care homes and schools, other high-risk places, sheltered housing, dormitories for migrant workers, transport access points, detained settings, rough sleepers etc. We are hoping to be able to align these plans to a national (or regional) template so that response is better coordinated. Care home outbreak management plans are already well established.

Data

The data we are receiving is very limited (mainly age and postcode of a tested individual), but more is promised. We are currently linking up our Business Intelligence team with that of the CCG in order to coordinate data reviews to support LCRC and to identify vulnerable people and groups.

Community Hub

The Community Hub is already set-up to provide the type of support we may have to provide to people isolating under this system. Discussions with the voluntary sector have started

Grant

The Government have granted funding to support Council's efforts. We are hoping to receive between £500 - £750k.

London Focus

A Good Practice Network for Test, Track and Trace has been set up. This is 4 Boroughs who are focusing on specific aspects of the system (Camden, Barnet, Hackney and Newham) leading on high-risk locations, vulnerable people and governance. This specifically includes:

1. Transport Hubs
2. Supporting diverse communities

3. BAME engagement

They may also be focusing on in future data integration and public communications.

Personal Protective Equipment

The Council has continued to source PPE in support of care homes, domestic care providers and for operational use. Predominantly sourced through the West London Alliance, stocks have been good with the exception of certain highly specialised items. They remain high and the Alliance is now moving to consider future order levels and the optimal approach to private care supply.

Reopening the Civic Centre

One of our first responses to the Covid-19 situation was to send most staff home so as to help ensure their health and safety. Only those in critical services who had an essential reason were allowed to come into the offices. We have had approximately 120 staff a day, not including partners and other people in the building for very short periods of time (possibly up to 80 a day), coming into the Civic Centre plus a few 'office' staff working out of Forward Drive (the Depot). Many of these staff are only in for a few hours of the day and several are partners, such as the Police. This number (120) has been rising slightly since the relaxation of lockdown.

The relaxation of lockdown was supported by guidance from Government on how offices should be laid out to ensure health and safety, including social distancing. With an eye on the need to re-start various services that reduced or closed as a result of Covid-19, and therefore potentially bring more people back into the Civic Centre, work is on-going to develop risk assessed plans to re-occupy the buildings. Although the focus has been on the Civic Centre, each council building we wish to re-open will need a similar plan and risk assessment. All plans and risk assessments are being discussed with the Unions. Current estimations are that we can only get up to 250 people back in the Civic Centre; more than that and the current possible mitigations will not be sufficient to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Even at this low level, the cost of re-occupation will be high; in the region of £100k revenue per month and up to £400k capital costs. Additionally, there is an inherent risk in people coming back to work, especially those who have to travel by public transport. Therefore, we have to seriously consider who and why people need to re-occupy our Civic Centre and perhaps look at other options than having people staff coming into the Civic Centre.

Only those in a critical service or a service that is to re-start should be considered as candidates for coming back into the buildings. However, even these people should only be returning to the Civic Centre if they have essential tasks that cannot be done from home. These tasks relate to the need to access specific items (technology, equipment, materials, documents), or interface with residents. Over time, we will be able to bring in technology to remove the need to access these items (some of this is already in the pipeline) and, together with using other space, we could also remove the need

for people to interface with residents at the Civic Centre. By reducing the need for staff to come into the buildings, we may have another option to re-occupying the Civic Centre.

However, it should be noted that the strain of working at home, especially when not fully prepared mentally or with an adequate workspace, is starting to be raised by staff. Reasons for not being prepared include not having the right equipment (technology, chair, desk etc), not having adequate work space and competing family commitments (such as children at home). Additionally, isolation from work colleagues and the feeling of not being able to 'do a good job' weigh heavily on many. Many teams report that although they can run the service with staff working from home, efficiency is curtailed. Therefore we also need to develop our staff's ability to work from home and in other 'remote' locations. We will need to consider providing equipment to equip workspaces and support people and Teams with ways in which to interact to reduce isolation and support wellbeing.

Council Meetings

Following the virtual meetings of Planning Committee, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee further virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams have been scheduled throughout June and July including Full Council on 16 July 2020. Despite some initial technical issues all the scheduled business was dealt with.

Regional Context

West London Alliance

Work is progressing with the West London Alliance to develop a co-ordinated response from the 7 local authorities to Economic recovery. Oxford Economics have been commissioned to provide a report on the Impact of Coronavirus on the West London economy. Thematic themes are being developed on Town Centres, Skills and Employment, Micro-businesses & Self Employed, Growth sectors, Housing & Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship and Business Start Up Support, Heathrow & the Supply Chain

Lessons Learnt

As reported to Cabinet in May, Harrow's Corporate Board is committed to capturing lessons learnt from the last few months. There will be an initial assessment of the lessons learnt which will be reported to Cabinet in July. This exercise will be informed in part by the recent staff survey 'How are you?' circulated to all staff.

RECOVERY

Although the predominant focus of the work of the Council has been on continuing to respond to the emergency and to begin the process of restoring services over the past month there has begun to be an increased focus on more medium term recovery activity.

The Council has decided that the right vehicle for recovery is the development of the Borough Plan. The Draft Borough Plan was approved by Council in February and set out the three key areas that the Borough should ensure were retained (sustaining quality education and training, celebrating communities and cohesion, maintaining low crime levels and improving community safety) and the five areas (Improving the environment and addressing climate change, tackling poverty and inequality, building homes and infrastructure, addressing health and social care inequality, thriving economy) where improvements in outcomes were required. The plan for 2020/1 was to engage extensively with partners and residents which has not been possible as a result of the Covid-19 emergency.

Discussions on recovery and the link with the development of the Borough Plan have commenced with an assumption that while the key priorities are unlikely to change, the Council and Borough's response will be heavily influenced by Covid-19. In particular, given the likelihood of a very sharp economic downturn, there will be a need to develop actions to support local residents and businesses that are adversely affected. In addition, the spotlight thrown on health inequalities as a result of the emergency will accelerate our plans in this area. Given the ongoing emergency and challenge of finding sufficient capacity to undertake detailed engagement and the challenge of doing so in a virtual world, the current intention is to start the engagement process in the Autumn with the priority for the next few months being on immediate action on issues such as the economy, climate change and health integration.

A further update on the work on recovery will be brought to the Cabinet in July.

Legal Implications

None.

Financial Implications

It is very clear that the Emergency Funding received to date of £13.1m will not cover the estimated financial impact to the Council of £38m. Council Officers and Members are linked into numerous lobbying forums to ensure the Government fully understands the financial impact of the emergency on Harrow Council, not only in the current year but over the three years of the MTFS as current events will carry legacy issues into future years.

Full Council approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy (2020/21 to 2022/23) in February 2020. The financial impact of the COVID 19 emergency is being considered alongside the published MTFS. This is a very important piece of work and it would not be prudent to make any assumptions about financial sustainability until the work is complete and there is further understanding on how the Government intend to fully compensate Local

Government in 2020/21 and in future years.

Equalities Implications/ Public Sector Equality Duty

At a national level there has been a significant focus on the disproportional impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities. This is a vitally important issue for Harrow given the diversity of our population and the high number of cases and deaths in the Borough. At this stage the granular detail of the ethnicity and other demographic characteristics of Harrow's cases is not available but it is highly likely that this will highlight disproportionate impacts on certain communities. As soon as statistics are available locally this will be an important focus of the Director of Public Health and has been identified as a priority by the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Future reports will provide updates on this key area and will inform our recovery work

Procurement Implications

Procurement are fully involved in responding to the Covid-19 response. Purchasing decisions as a direct consequence of Covid-19 have been responded to consistent with the Government's Procurement Policy Notes that have been issued. To that end there is compliance in all Covid-19 related procurement activity.

Council Priorities

The Council's priorities are set out below:-

Improving the environment and addressing climate change
Tackling poverty and inequality
Building homes and infrastructure
Addressing health and social care inequality
Thriving economy

The decisions taken sought to support those most in need, protect services and support local businesses.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dawn Calvert Chief Financial Officer

Date: 10 June 2020

Name: Hugh Peart Monitoring Officer

Date: 10 June 2020

Name: Nimesh Mehta



Head of Procurement

Date: 4 June 2020

Name: Sean Harriss



Chief Executive

Date: 10 June 2020

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Alison Atherton, Senior Professional Democratic Services email:alison.atherton@harrow.gov.uk tel:020 8424 1266

Background Papers: None