
REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	9 July 2020
Subject:	COVID 19 – Economic Recovery and 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 – Shielding Letter Appendix 2 – Core Narrative Appendix 3 – Stakeholders Questions and Answers Appendix 4 – Recovery Plan Appendix 5 – West London Economic Prosperity Board Agenda – 3 July 2020

Summary and Recommendations

On 18 June 2020 Cabinet considered an update 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, including the economic impact of the pandemic and the Council's plans for recovery.

Recommendations: That (1) the updates be noted and a further update be submitted to Cabinet in September 2020, if appropriate; (2) consultation and engagement on the Borough Plan be paused until the Autumn so that all partners, and the community are better placed to respond effectively.

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

On 22 June 2020, the Government announced an easing of lockdown restrictions with effect 4 July 2020. In terms of the on-going public health emergency, many of the restrictions and social distancing requirements mean that whilst we are gradually opening up a number of services, we continue to deliver the majority of services in a different way.

New services are stable and performing well and it is important to acknowledge and recognise the hard work and high performance of staff during the emergency. The feedback from the Pulse Survey and staff focus groups has indicated that staff, on the whole, feel well informed and supported by their managers and been overwhelming positive in relation to working from home. A small minority of staff have found working from home challenging, for a variety of reasons. Collaboration with colleagues is cited as an issue with home working.

This report provides an update on the Council's overall response to Covid-19. Since the last report to Cabinet on 18 June while the Council continues to deal with a significant emergency and the delivery of additional services and activities such as the Community Hub and the development of local outbreak plans the intensity of the emergency has reduced as the incidents of covid-19 cases reduces. However, due to the continuation of significant social distancing rules the provision of most services continue to be predominantly virtual with the vast majority of Council staff continuing to work from home and remotely. Although, the emergency phase of the covid-19 has begun to pass the easing of lockdown has involved a significant amount of activity relating to both restarting Council services and projects and in supporting the reopening of many local shops and businesses.

UPDATE ON SERVICES

People Services Directorate

Schools and Education

Since we last reported to Cabinet, there has been a steady increase of children and young people in Harrow attending schools, colleges, nurseries

and early years settings. By the week-ending 26 June there were almost 6,000 children attending combined settings in the Borough. This is a testament to the collaborative endeavours of Council staff, working alongside school Governing Bodies, Head teachers and Early Years providers. Our senior leadership team in Children's Services have facilitated virtual Q & A sessions for School Governors, Head teachers and Designated Safeguarding leads with our Director of Public Health to help apply Government Guidance in relation to public health, safeguarding and risk management. This has engendered a steady increase in parental confidence which has enabled more and more children to return to schools and educational settings in the designated year groups.

In Harrow, there are over 1,800 children who have an Education, Health and Care plan [EHCP]. All of these children have been supported throughout the pandemic whether they are in school or not, often via virtual means. For example, our educational psychologists have been doing online sessions for parents on behaviour management and creative care. This has been augmented by the support delivered by the Council's early help services, as well as voluntary sector services.

At the time of writing, there is no stated expectation from the Department for Education [DfE] that schools will be required to open over the summer holiday period. Schools have been open to vulnerable children and children of key workers throughout the pandemic. Parents are not *required* to send their children to school, but for those most at risk of falling behind they are being strongly encouraged to do so. There is no penalty at this time for non-attendance. The Government is planning summer holiday activities to support children and young people over this period through the use of other agencies, although schools may play a part. We are awaiting further guidance on the detail of this proposal.

Beyond the summer period the Government has said that it will invest in additional tuition for the most disadvantaged to prevent them falling further behind. The funding for this will not be all new money as the current Year 7 'Catch Up' funding will cease and be incorporated into the new fund. The formula for distributing this Government funding is still awaited and it may be passported through the Local Authority.

For September, the DfE has yet to produce detailed guidance but the expectation is that the vast majority of children will be expected to return to school. However, this is dependent on scientific advice, received through the DfE, and particularly the advice on social distancing, which is already being relaxed to 1metre plus. Schools otherwise will still have to maintain a digital learning offer provided remotely for those not on site.

What we have learnt during this pandemic is, what was already known from the last Harrow Residents' Survey, that our schools are highly valued by Harrow residents, and that the schools in Harrow are at the heart of our community cohesion. The relationship of schools with parents and with the Council is strong, and will be a significant strand of our ability to recover as a community, to take forward our Borough plan over the next few years.

Adult Social Care

Throughout the pandemic, Adult Social Care services have continued to be an integral part of the Health and Care system in Harrow, as reflected in the out of hospital recovery plan that was recently discussed at the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 24 June. During this period of emergency, the local Adult social care teams have not needed to apply any of the Care Act easements, which were permitted by the temporary changes to legislation. This is a credit to the resilience and competence of our workforce.

Adult social care staff have been offering welfare calls to those on the shielded list during the early part of the pandemic, as part of the 7 day per week service. The need for these welfare calls have diminished considerably, and as the restrictions on shielded citizens have been relaxed, adult social care practitioners have been moving more to the care and support arrangements for those citizens who remain eligible for services under the Care Act 2014. We are seeing waves of need emerging in terms of mental health, associated with grief, loss and bereavement, as well as more acute suicidal and self-harm presentations. Our staff expecting more of this pent up social and emotional need to emerge, alongside other chronic health needs, over the next few months.

The number of Hospital admissions for Covid has reduced significantly in Harrow in the past few weeks. This has been demonstrated in the regular updates to Members. The Directorate has delivered all Hospital discharges alongside community partners throughout the emergency period, with the brokerage team being available 7 days per week. As the hospital numbers have declined, the brokerage team and hospital team have been able to scale back the resource needed to a stand-by system at weekends, which will be able to flex-up again in the event of a second wave of the virus.

We reported in the last Cabinet on the submission made to Government on the support arrangements put in place for supporting the care home sector in Harrow.

<https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjM7eXaoZ3qAhVjQkEAHc6GD5kQFjADegQIBRAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.harrow.gov.uk%2Fdownloads%2Ffile%2F27452%2F covid-19-care-home-support-package&usg=AOvVaw3folJNBsGn5X40vqb6uf3n>

The critical importance of supporting care homes for controlling the virus in the future has been recognised at Government level, and codified in New National Guidance being issued in June.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-care-of-people-in-care-homes#history>

This Guidance outlines the expectation that care homes will have testing available to all staff and residents on a recurring basis. In Harrow, we have continued to have robust arrangements in place to support all our care providers, including passporting quickly the grant monies from central Government to our care homes, and offering additional Personal Protective Equipment when needed, as well as ongoing advice, support and training for the workforce .

This National Guidance reflects our own local learning in Harrow about the vulnerabilities of the citizens of Harrow who are living in Care home settings, and this will remain a significant priority for us in supporting the local provider market over the next year as we plan and implement our overall recovery.

Whilst many of our buildings and sites for delivery have been closed during the pandemic for citizens who usually attend them, the services have continued to be delivered through outreach, telephonic and virtual means. We have not received a groundswell of requests from families or citizens to re-open the buildings/settings. There is a clear recognition by these families and vulnerable citizens that maintaining social distancing, undertaking the habitual cleaning and hygiene will be significant challenges to ensure that the risks are managed for these cohorts of citizens in these settings for some time to come.

We are now considering carefully how we can build on the successes of the alternative care and support arrangements made through other means during the pandemic. We are co-producing a questionnaire for our citizens to feedback on how they want these services to be continued and delivered in the future and we will establish some proposals over the next few weeks. It is unlikely that these settings can be safely re-opened in the foreseeable future.

Children's Social Care

Staffing levels have increased to over 90% since the last Cabinet report. This has enabled us to maintain and progress our statutory responsibilities and ensure children and young people are safeguarded, especially those exposed to violence and vulnerability. We have ensured that our corporate parenting responsibilities towards our Children Looked After [CLA] and Care Leavers have been duly exercised throughout this period of lockdown. The DfE have confirmed that they are content with Harrow's performance and due diligence in this regard, and have commended us for our resilience in delivering a 7 day a week service during the pandemic.

We have gradually increased the number of face to face meetings with children and families using appropriate risk assessments, PPE and following Government social distancing guidelines. Referrals are beginning to increase at our "front door" and are near the levels of pre- COVID lockdown. This has impacted the range of our services. Early Help referrals are increasing and the numbers of children subject of child protection plans and children looked after has risen, mainly as a result of a number multi - sibling groups needing interventions.

The Family courts have been slower to implement virtual hearings in contrast to the youth court sector and this has seen some delay in care proceedings, and some children have been placed at home on a care order due to the risk averse nature of the decision-making which cannot be done in real time, physical court hearings

The increase in numbers of children looked after is now beginning to impact on our placement sufficiency. This pressure is very much in line with the experiences of our neighbouring local authorities across the West London

Alliance (WLA). We have put in place a number of strategies to mitigate this pressure through our challenge panels, our in-house fostering recruitment, and the collaborative work with the WLA.

A wide range of resources are being provided by Early Help Services mainly by virtual and telephonic means, with the children centres being partially open to limited groups and partner services; especially those delivered from shared nursery and schools sites, which have remained open for vulnerable children throughout the pandemic. Current virtual support includes parenting support 1:1, and organised groups and drop-in groups, fitness sessions and targeted school readiness support for individual young people.

The children centres are also currently facilitating some ante-natal classes run by partner health providers. As lockdown is further relaxed, we plan to host some socially distanced contact sessions for children and their families, which will be facilitated by the contact supervision service. This is indicative of a phased reopening of the delivery sites over the next three months for other services, in line with Government Guidance.

We have certainly learnt that virtual communications with children, families and other professionals has benefits in many areas and going forward a more virtual oriented model will offer new ways of working with families and the professional network, though some meetings will need to be “hybrid” or partially face to face. This will be greatly supported by the ICT roll-out across the Council, especially the wide availability of *MS teams* and other modes of communication such as *Skype for Business*. We have discovered that many multi-Professional meetings and Panels can be more efficiently managed virtually, and enable greater participation and attendance, due to reductions in travel time. There are also some other areas of work with children and families which can be managed virtually including payments and some aspects of signposting and advice, through the duty team, across the Child’s journey. We will build this learning into our working practices and embed this as a key component on how we will deliver services across the whole of the child’s journey alongside our partner agencies.

Community Directorate

The recovery plan is in full swing with many core services such as waste and environment service operating normally or close to normal. We have been providing a management plan 7 days per week to assist in ensuring the parks, streets and premises are fully supported during the recovery period.

We have successfully bid for £638,000 from TFL in the London Streetspace Plan which supports walking and cycling initiatives.

Special Needs Transport is working at much reduced levels due to the number of persons requiring the service as well as the required social distancing. The service is also supporting the residents who require the home to C19 testing facility.

Measures around **parking and enforcement** are being slowly reintroduced to support the reopening of businesses and prevent obstruction; we will commence a review of residential parking over the coming month.

Reopening of commercial businesses continues with 4 July being the next step. This will include the reopening of bars and restaurants with strict requirements on social distancing with 1m plus and we continue to work with all parties to ensure an orderly but successful transition.

General guidance is as follows:

- Encourage use of apps to order, table service only and encouraging use of outdoor areas where possible;
- Toilets should be kept open and managed, including cleaning regimes, ventilation;
- Clear guidance to customers about behaviour and that lack of social distancing will mean lack of service, and included outside the premises (guidance indicates Local Authorities and Police will be allowed to enforce social distancing issues and gatherings and have powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices);
- Use the minimum amount of staff to work to ensure safety, as work from home / stay at home remains the message;
- Indoor gatherings can only be up to 2 households (including social bubbles), outdoor gatherings of the same or group of maximum 6 people from any number of households (guidance);
- It is illegal to gather in groups of 30 or more (law) unless certain circumstances;
- Local Authorities told to avoid issuing licences for any event that will lead to a large gathering;
- All guidance has been changed to reflect the 2m / 1m rule, but contrary to belief the aim is always 2m unless it can be shown as not viable and then mitigation should be in place. If cannot operate at 1m with mitigation, or can only operate less than 1m, then should not open. Exceptions are in place for close contact businesses (e.g. hairdressers) where visors must be worn at all times

The new online appointment booking system for access to the **Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC)** will take effect from Monday 29 June. The site is open for pre booking and will have a 14-day rolling calendar. The performance will be closely monitored and reviewed in four weeks.

Housing have started a phased approach to resuming the full repairs and maintenance service to Council tenants from mid-June 2020 in line with

Government Covid19 guidelines. All planned maintenance contracts, with one exception, have now returned to site with appropriate risk assessments etc.

The Government announced on 24 June that £105 million will be used to support **rough sleepers** and those at risk of homelessness into tenancies of their own. The funding will be used to help with deposits for accommodation and to secure alternative rooms that are already available and ready for use. A further £16 million is also being provided so that vulnerable people currently in emergency accommodation can access the specialist help they need for substance misuse issues. The £105 million is made up of £85 million of new funding from HM Treasury and £20 million from refocusing existing homelessness and rough sleeping budgets. The criteria for allocation of this funding are still being developed by MHCLG. We understand that the money will go to high demand areas including London. We do not know yet whether boroughs like Harrow will receive an allocation or need to bid competitively or whether any match will be required.

We are now housing 22 rough sleepers in emergency accommodation and are working towards offering them better longer-term housing solutions. Sheltered housing tenants who were isolating with relatives have started to return to the schemes. All tenants are still receiving regular staff calls to check on their well-being. Fire Risk Assessments and Asbestos surveys of our existing housing stock are now back to normal service.

An integrated series of activities are being delivered to **reopen the town centre and district centres** by Community & Public Protection and Transport Highway and Asset Management with support from Communications and Economic Development. A £16m capital proposal has been submitted by **Regeneration** pulling together housing (energy efficiency), transport (replacing LFN funds for Wealdstone), and Economic Development (HAC) to MHCLG to develop and submit a programme. If successful, this would provide a huge capital stimulus to Harrow's economy.

Learn Harrow secured £363,000 additional funding in June 2020. This includes £163,000 for Skills for Life courses. The funding will support an additional 375 learners; Skills for life qualification in English or ESOL **115**, Employability qualification **50**, ICT qualification **115**, Vocational qualification: **65** (eg. customer service, health and social care etc), **ICT support course 30**. An additional £100,000 was awarded for ESOL provision from MHCLG's ESOL Integration Fund.

The Business Grant and Discretionary Grant provide financial relief to eligible applicants. Work is ongoing with the WLA to develop a set of co-ordinated proposals to stimulate the sub-regional economy across Support for businesses, Skills and Employment, Town Centres, Growth sectors, Heathrow, Housing and Infrastructure, with the environmental / green agenda as a cross cutting theme.

In terms of **Headstone Manor and Museum**, July will be used to allow deep cleaning and preparing the site for opening to the public. A further risk assessment to address safety concerns for the public will be submitted for approval. One way systems, signage and social distancing markers will be

placed around the site to ensure the public are clear about where to go and how to remain safe at the venue. A reduced menu for the café will be confirmed and the café will operate as take away only. Museums within the London area are staggering opening from mid-July to the end of August but neither Heath Robinson Museum nor Bentley Priory Museum have announced reopening dates as yet. Staffing of both the museum and the café are a challenge – two out of the three café team will be unable to return to work (one is shielding and one has school age children at home with no childcare) plus the museum itself is currently manned by volunteers who fall into the vulnerable age group.

No guidelines have been issued for holding weddings and large functions as yet therefore full-time museum staff will be redeployed, where possible, to cover the gaps in shift work before we use our as and when pool of staff. This staffing challenge and the timescales of getting risk assessments agreed is why we are currently suggesting an opening date of 5 August. If these issues are resolved quicker than anticipated, then the café and museum could open earlier.

July and August will be used to allow for deep cleaning, maintenance work and preparing **Harrow Arts Centre** for opening to the public. Capital works continue on the site and we have scheduled restoration of the floor in Elliott Hall and improvements to the toilets in the main building to take place in August while the public are not on site. All hirers have cancelled their bookings with us for the summer term and only one customer has expressed any interest in holding classes at HAC in August. To keep our overhead costs as low as we can we are proposing to reopen to the public from 1 September 2020. No guidelines have been issued for holding performances as yet so initially we are concentrating on classroom hire. All regular hirers have submitted their bookings for September onwards and been placed into the room booking system. The spaces that we have allocated to hirers will need to be assessed in terms of social distancing measures and we may need to move small classes into larger spaces. A further risk assessment to address safety concerns for the public will be submitted for approval.

The proposal is that two **libraries** will be opened as a test, Stanmore and Wealdstone Libraries, from Tuesday 7 July. Perspex screens are to be installed at the staff points and external queuing signage. There will also be a pull-up floor banner for each library reminding the public of the need for social distancing and the washing of hands. Library members can collect 'grab and go' bags which will be packed to the tastes of the member, e.g. romance, crime, or science fiction.

The Council has a range of tools at its disposal to bring positive change including planning, procurement, and communication. This would include accelerating pre Covid-19 proposals to improve enforcement of planning agreements, implementation of social value in major contracts and restarting campaigns to promote shop local and using the town centre and district centres. The range of social distancing measures put in place by Highways and Public Protection in Harrow's High Streets would help de-risk health concerns related to increasing the number of shoppers in Harrow's key commercial and employment hubs.

The re-opening of **Leisure Services** will be dependent on government advice on when it is safe to do so. In the interim period we are discussing with the operator, Everyone Active, the Risk Assessments, Communications and financial impact of Covid 19 on the centre. If there are developments in this area which require an urgent Member level decision, this will be dealt with via a Leader /Portfolio Holder decision report.

Planning legislation was laid before Parliament on 24 June and come into effect on 1 August to introduce a new permitted development right to extend blocks of flats over 3 storeys by another two storeys without planning permission. A briefing note will be provided to give more detail on this.

Planning and licensing changes were announced by Government with the **Business and Planning Bill** introduced on 25 June with all stages to be heard on 29 June, and the Act and implementation likely coming in within 48 hours of that (pre-4 July openings).

The main aspects of this Bill include:

- **Pavement Licensing**

- Premises will be able to apply for temporary furniture on the pavement (including tables, chairs, umbrellas, heaters etc) via application with a maximum £100 licence fee.
- Consultation will be 7 days only (normally 28 days) and Section 6 gives reasons can be rejected (obstruction is main one, but limited reasons).
- We can specify the duration of the licence, but minimum 3 months and if none specified, it ends 02/09/21 (all licences will end at this point, unless law changed)
- This does not give street trading rights.

- **Alcohol Licensing**

- Allowance of off sales for licensed premises for limited period of up to 31/09/21
- Sets out review and enforcement, but law will basically assume right to do so unless specified reasons set out

- **Goods, Passenger and Public Service Vehicles**

- Allow temporary exemption to 8-person limit in vehicles
- Certain licences granted from 17/4/20 for 1 year now extended to 24/3/22 as long as certain documents provided

- **Planning and Construction Times**

- Modification of any construction condition to allow all day or longer on particular days

- 14-day notice must be given (with some exemptions) and all expire 01/04/21
- Does not seem to apply to any concerned with development of a dwelling house
- **Extension of Certain Planning Permissions**
 - Applies to any application that ends by 31/12/20, and takes it to require beginning by 01/04/21
- **Extension of time limits for beginning of development**
 - Certain ones extended now to state must begin no later than 01/04/21
- **Extension of duration of certain Listed Consents**
 - Those granted that fall within period 23/3/20 to 31/12/20, extended to 01/04/21

This will involve extensive work between now and 4th July, as it involves changes to licences and a new pavement licensing regime. The Community directorate will work in liaison with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Leader, where any decision is required.

Resources Directorate Update

Community Hub

The Covid-19 hotline was launched on 25 March to support and advise residents with queries and requirements in relation to Coronavirus. The golden number was split into three options:-

- Financial Hardship
- Health & Wellbeing
- Food requests and general advice

Since its inception, the hotline has received over 5,000 calls with two-thirds of enquiries based around food supply including Government, Local Authority and Supermarket availability. Demand has gradually reduced to the Covid hotline primarily as a result of residents gaining access to supermarket slots and therefore not requiring food whilst shielding or self-isolating but also as residents become more aware of restrictions relating to the virus. The Community Hub reduced weekend availability to core opening hours (Monday - Friday: 09:00 to 17:00) from 19 June onwards.

Outbound contact to the Shielded community has continued to grow with over a thousand calls made each week for the last six weeks. These contacts provide reassurance, support and advice regarding financial hardship and food.

On 22 June the Government announced that the Shielding programme would be paused from 1 August with a relaxation of restrictions from 6 July (letter attached at Appendix 1 and Appendices 2 and 3 set out the core narrative and the Stakeholder Q and A.). The top seven supermarkets will continue to provide priority slots for residents who are clinically extremely vulnerable beyond these dates and the Government has requested that Local Authorities continue to support vulnerable residents.

Discussions on funding this work are ongoing and we are currently reviewing what this may entail including the provision of the Community Hub in partnership with the voluntary sector.

Borough Plan

The Borough Plan is central to the recovery work that the Council and its partners have started. The Harrow Strategic Partnership, made up of the key partners from across the Borough, has started discussions on how recovery can be governed through the priorities in the Borough Plan, and also how the pandemic will shift some of the focus within the priorities. It is clear for instance that the immediate legacy of the pandemic will have a major impact on the economy, so this will be a critically important priority to work on across the partnership in the coming months as we start the recovery.

However, as covered in the Lesson Learnt part of this report one of key strengths in Harrow is our partnerships, so the approach to involve all agencies and sectors in the recovery phase against the Borough Plan priorities has already been agreed as the right way forward.

In considering next steps, partners recognise that restart and recovery is different for different partners and sectors, so to reflect this it is recommended to Cabinet that the consultation and engagement on the Borough Plan, that Council approved in February 2020, will start no sooner than the Autumn, in order to ensure that all partners (and the community itself) can fully take part.

In addition, linked to this pause in consultation and engagement, is the need for the Council and partners to fully understand the impact on our communities of the pandemic, and how these impacts need to change and adapt the approach we take in supporting residents and communities over the coming months and years. There have been a disproportionate number of deaths in Harrow from Covid-19, and whereas to date we do not have local breakdowns of the ethnicity of those deaths, it is clear from the Public Health England report that ethnicity and inequality (and the relationship between them) are critical factors in deaths, and that residents in our BAME communities are more likely to suffer the negative impacts either from the virus itself or the economic and social shocks which will follow. The Black Lives Matters movement has highlighted these facts nationally and internationally, so it is vitally important that the Council and its partners fully understands the nature and issues facing all of our communities in Harrow and tackles these issues head on through the delivery of the Borough Plan.

Grants to Small Business

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 28 June 2020, the Council has received 2,980 applications, reduced to 2,465 after duplications and rejections. 2,362 applications have been paid totalling £35.3m. There is a balance of 221 grants at 28 June, of which 103 are applications still to be fully processed and 118 are where applicants have appealed or were previously rejected and are being reconsidered. The current estimate is that these cases will be resolved (either paid or rejected) by mid July.

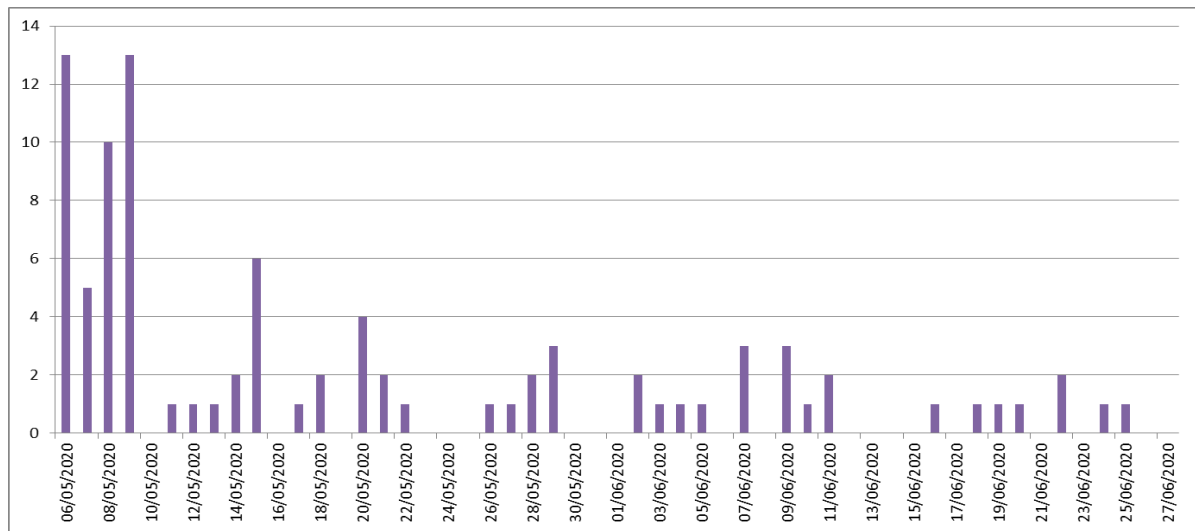
Update on Test and Trace and Local Outbreak Plans

Test and Trace has started nationally. The programme relies on anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 (temperature, cough or loss of taste or smell) requesting a test and self-isolating. If the test is positive, the individual continues to self-isolate for 7 days from the start of their symptoms, and their household isolates for 14 days. The individual is also contacted by a team of contact tracers at Department of Health and Social Care and is asked to identify anyone outside of their household that they have been in close contact with in the days leading up to becoming symptomatic. These contacts are then asked to self-isolate for 14 days and to have a test should they develop symptoms.

Any complex cases are followed up by the specialists in the London Coronavirus Response Cell, LCRC. This would include:

- cases involving specific settings e.g. care homes, residential care, schools, homeless hostels, places of detention etc; or
- any suspected community clusters (where there are multiple cases in more than two households in a small geographic area) or linked to a community event; or
- any suspected workplace cluster.

Currently, there are very few cases in Harrow – under 10 per week - and none have resulted in specific outbreak/incident management teams being stood up to deal with them.



In Harrow, a key part of our plan to prevent and control local outbreaks of COVID-19 is asking people with symptoms to get a test and, via NHS Test and Trace, asking people who have been in close contact with them to self-isolate to prevent them passing it on.

There are four Good Practice Network boroughs in London. They are working together, with the London Director of Public Health network, to understand the barriers that need to be overcome so that all Londoners feel safe and reassured to use the NHS Test and Trace System. Vitality, it must also be accessible for everyone including all of our diverse communities and people facing deprivation and digital exclusion. The learning from this work will be shared with all London boroughs and through national channels.

NHS Test and Trace will play a key role in keeping Harrow safe and preventing a possible second wave and it is also critical for the renewal of our local economy but it will only work if the vast majority of Londoners with coronavirus symptoms use NHS Test and Trace and at the moment too many people do not feel safe, reassured or able to use it. Ensuring that the diverse communities in Harrow know about and trust NHS Test and Trace is a significant part of our plan.

Our plan is broken down into 7 themes, as per the government guidance. Each area looks at a different element of the prevention and control of COVID-19, and considers the risks and mitigations we can put in place. The themes are:

1. Prevention and management of outbreaks in school and residential/care settings
2. Prevention and management of outbreaks in other high risk locations (e.g. workplaces, communities and locations)
3. Local and mobile testing capacity and capability
4. Contact tracing on complex systems
5. Data Integration
6. Supporting vulnerable people who are identified as cases or contacts
7. Local Boards, communications and engagement

The main report is supplemented by “action cards” for different situations.

The local health protection board, chaired by the DPH, will oversee the plan and will mobilise any actions necessary. This will report into the Harrow Health and Wellbeing Board. The Outbreak Control Plan will be on the council website on 30th June. It is however an iterative document and will be updated regularly as guidance changes, good practice evidence emerges or situations develop.

Buildings /Reopening the Civic Centre

Risk assessments in terms of the Council’s buildings were on going and, with further changes imminent, review would be required. Whilst the cleaning regime continued to be more frequent and focused, it would not be possible to make Civic 1 sufficiently COVID safe, in line with government guidance to allow full staff occupation. The Committee Rooms would continue to be out of bounds as they were effectively sealed rooms.

FINANCE UPDATE

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 financial impact of the emergency for 2020/21. To date the Council has reported three times to MHCLG and the submissions are summarised below:

	Submission 1 - April	Submission 2 - May	Submission – June
	£’m	£’m	£’m
Est. additional expenditure 20/21	11.291	14.157	18.719
Est. loss of income 20/21	23.662	40.663	25.320
Total estimated impact 20/21	34.953	54.82	44.039
Less NNDR Rate Relief		(17)	
Total estimated impact 20/21	34.953	37.82	44.039

Between submission 2 and 3, the estimated additional expenditure has increased by £4.5m:

- Adult social care – additional demand and temporary additional support to care providers (£1m)
- Transport to U18's – withdrawal of funding from TFL (£1m)
- Share of London mortuary costs (£650k)
- Additional Civic Centre cleaning and health and safety works (£500k)

The estimated loss of income has increased from £23.6m to £25.3m, an increase of £1.6m. This is the net impact of:

- Improvement in the estimated loss of sales, fees and charges of £1.130m as a result of revised forecasts based on additional actual information and services re-starting;
- An estimated increase in Collection Fund losses of £2.787m. £650k of this relates to a forecast increase in the number of new Council Tax Support cases from 2,000 to 2,500. The remainder relates to an estimated increase in non-collection of business rates from 5% to 10%. Collection rates remain under constant review.

The returns to MHCLG are likely to be monthly.

LESSONS LEARNT

As with any response to a major emergency it is important that a lessons learnt exercise is carried out so that the things that went well can be maintained or strengthened, and the areas for improvement identified and fixed. Although such an exercise will be carried out in more detail in the autumn when it is clear that there is capacity to do this thoroughly, and there is more clarity on the next stages of the pandemic, initial reflections have been considered and are set out below.

Staff response

- The adaptability and resilience of staff has been remarkable. They have demonstrated that we can be imaginative and resourceful, setting up new services in a week e.g. the Community Hub support to the vulnerable, IT to enable homeworking, business grants distributed to local businesses, but also delivering services through the emergency at an incredibly high level, from social work to enforcement, and refuse collection to Housing repairs.
- The quick adoption of technology solutions has been a positive outcome of the response to Covid.

The challenge remains of communicating, engaging and supporting staff out in the community delivering services, who do not have access to IT and phones etc. Generally we are better at supporting those in the Civic Centre rather than those working in the community. This distinction between staff who have access to IT and those that do not has been highlighted through the recent staff survey and we are taking

steps to make communications and engagement with these groups of staff better.

- Communications and engagement with Councillors, especially at the executive and leadership levels has been well regarded. It has been more challenging to engage directly with all Councillors, and in particular backbenchers, but this has been done through attendance at Group meetings. However, working through how this engagement can be improved will be critical given ward Councillors critical community engagement role. Members have been provided with support in terms of IT but support on other aspects of their role may be needed as they too are undertaking their role at home and may also have other responsibilities to manage such as caring for dependents/ home schooling.

Organisational strategic weaknesses

- Organisational strategic weaknesses in IT and the Human Resources (HR) Department have been particularly highlighted – for example the organisation did not have good IT and did not have managers developed well enough to deal with HR issues in such unprecedented times. A key question in due course will be how much the IT and under investment in the development of our workforce has held back our ability to handle Covid as effectively as we could have, but it's clear that any gaps were filled with the ingenuity and determination of staff. The challenge though is that this is unsustainable over a longer period, so getting the right staff development and technology in place is important to put right.
- Covid has reinforced that we work better when we are doing so collectively rather than in silos. There has been a positive impact on cross-organisational working, which needs to be locked in through the restart and recovery work.
- We managed to maintain all our services throughout the emergency and do this whilst also starting new services.
- The Public Health team and its capacity has been reduced to a near statutory minimum service in recent years, but resources and capacity will need to be considered for future planning of such things as pandemics, but also to support the nature of recovery work the Council will need to lead over the coming years.
- The Council could perhaps be classed as being risk averse previously, and the nature of the response to the pandemic has meant we have had to change this approach and act faster. On the whole this has been very successful, so there is a clear opportunity to build this approach into the future way of doing things. We have for example mobilised new services in a matter of weeks, recognising they were not perfect, but were able to modify and adapt as we grew them and now they are performing well.

- The Council has had to make sense of sometimes ambiguous guidance from Central Government, and has done this very well. In our experience, many key elements of the crisis response would have been more effectively and quickly delivered had they been devolved to Councils at the outset, along with appropriate funding and powers. This includes at the very least securing PPE supplies, creating local testing facilities, and local outbreak management. This experience supports further lobbying that Harrow could engage in to drive further decentralisation to the local level in future.

Emergency planning and business continuity plans

- Our Business Continuity Plans are good but they were never developed for this type of scenario, i.e. a longer term emergency. It is important that we develop plans in the future that support such scenarios, as our current pandemic plans do not assume a lockdown scenario in the way that Covid-19 has created.
- In building on the lessons learnt through Covid-19 on our business continuity plans and planning this has shown that as an organisation we need to understand risk more, and how our plans can fully take this into account.
- The level of understanding of the requirements in health and safety management by key people running services is an area we need to improve upon. This is one example of the historic under investment in management development.

Communications

- The organisation's internal communications mechanisms were under developed before the pandemic started so new arrangements had to be put in place very quickly. As a consequence there are now better systems and channels in place but this was not a barrier for many Councils to have to deal with this.

Financial impacts

- We need to recognise the organisation's financial vulnerability to the challenges we have had to deal with through Covid-19. However, the fact that the Council has a comparatively lower reliance on commercial income and our strategy to sensitively pursue the collection of Council Tax has meant that we have mitigated what could have been a more significant impact on the Council's finances.
- Business grants were administered mindfully and robustly – this should help achieve low rates of fraud. There has been a massively increased pace of business grants but done in a sensible and measured way, which will be the right approach in the long run. However, it is

recognised that initial limitations around staff capacity and IT did mean that the starting of this service was not as fast as we would have liked.

Partnership working

- The benefit of positive partnership relationships has been especially important as we have dealt with the impacts of Covid-19 e.g. health partners, schools and the voluntary and community sector. The longstanding strength of these relationships is good and robust, and can be built upon in the future to the benefit of Harrow residents.
- The importance of the care home system is now more recognised, not just nationally but in Harrow as well. In Harrow there was already a strong relationship between the Council and the care sector but the lack of a robust commissioning framework has been highlighted. This will be important to put in place as we move into the recovery phase and will be integrated into the wider work with our health partners.
- The regional position and support has been a strength e.g. the West London Alliance and the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) a further good example of the partnership, where West London had good supplies in place before many other parts of the UK. In addition, the WLA's support and line around environmental services helped boroughs maintain a consistent line, which has been a real strength during restart as services have more or less come back on stream at similar times. The Community Hub has been a good example of partnership working with voluntary and community sector (VCS), where as a result many 1,000s of Harrow residents have benefitted from outbound welfare calls (both from the Council and the VCS) and also received food parcels via the work of the partnership. This is an important example of where VCS delivery operated in tandem with the Council contact centre to achieve an excellent result for residents.
- During the crisis, many informal community groups have either formed or strengthened to provide mutual aid within streets, neighbourhoods or other communities. These groups played a vital role in meeting need in the community. Although in many instances there was limited interaction between these groups and the Council, their existence and strength creates a new channel for the Council to use to deepen its engagement with communities in future.

Health and Other Inequalities

- Given our existing knowledge and intelligence around health inequalities in the borough it is a fair challenge to ask whether we could have anticipated the nature of the impact on Harrow's communities. It is important that we fully understand the 'new normal' as best as we can so that as a Council and through our partners we identify those interventions that will support those who are made worse off from the medium to longer term impacts of the pandemic. This will be a central part of the recovery work as it is a key facet of the Borough Plan.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Whilst covid-19 to date has been a public health emergency there is now an impending economic emergency. The latest figures for May show the claimant count was 10,425 residents (6.6%) compared to unemployment of 4,670 (3.1%) at the peak of the recession in October 2009. It should be noted that 8.6% of Harrow's Young People are unemployed.

The Universal Claimant count has increased by 10,426 in three months from 9,192 in March 2020 to 19,618 in May 2020. In addition there are 30,300 furloughed workers in Harrow, with the risk that not all of them will return to work when the furlough scheme ends. None of this is unique to Harrow, unemployment in London stands at 7.6% and Harrow is 20th in London for the number of furloughed workers in London.

We are now in the first phase of recovery, with Economic Development co-ordinating a response to help safeguard jobs (and businesses). This work includes the combined activities of Planning, Regeneration, Housing, Transport Highways, Public Protection, Revenue and Benefits, and Strategic Partnerships (Policy, Communications, Intelligence) to support the reopening of the town centre and district centres, bring investment to deliver capital programmes and provide grants and advise to businesses.

We are working with the WLA to develop our next steps in towards economic recovery. This includes a number of "Asks" to the government to provide greater powers, flexibilities and funding to the West London sub-region. These will be used to support residents and businesses, create new jobs and help residents get those jobs. This work is split across several themes with a local authority leading on each area (Microbusinesses and Self-employed (Harrow), Skills and Employment (Hounslow), Town Centres (Barnet), Housing and Infrastructure (Brent), Growth Sector (Hammersmith and Fulham), Low Carbon Economy (Ealing with strategic leadership Paul Walker, Harrow), and Heathrow (Hounslow). A summary of the "Asks" is outlined in the attached report to the Economic Prosperity Board (Appendix 5). No single local authority has the capacity to develop programmes across the key areas that have been identified. There needs to be a degree of trust between local authorities and cooperation on the development of our "Asks" and programmes across the sub-region and work still needs to be undertaken on what locally delivered programmes could look like.

There are clear benefits in aligning with a programme which anchors a West London economy bigger than that of UK cities (outside of London). The development of those "Asks" to central government has been underpinned by research the WLA commissioned Oxford Economics (OE) to complete. The OE work forecasts the impact of Covid 19 on the West London boroughs, providing forecasts by sector, business size, and occupation. This in turn helps highlight the opportunities to focus on the immediate skills needs of residents and businesses and the key areas of future growth. We are now taking the first steps forward in stabilising the economy, supporting the reopening of businesses that were forced to stop trading and administering

some financial relief where possible through business grants programmes. The next steps will (subject to responses from government) be a comprehensive stimulus programme of support.

In tandem with all of this is a need to have a clear vision of what the future of Harrow's economy could be. The work commissioned from 2020 Vision sets out different paths to follow in delivering the greater equality set out in the Harrow Ambition Plan.

RECOVERY

The prolonged emergency as a result of the COVID-19 virus has inevitably led to the need for a significant recovery process both for the organisation and for the community. Recovery requires a co-ordinated process of supporting affected communities in the reconstruction of physical infra- structure, and particularly in this instance, of the restoration of the emotional, social, economic and physical well-being.

The process of recovery also provides an opportunity for regeneration, both physical and economic, improvement in service delivery and improvements in community partnership working and well- being. The Council has identified the following areas on which to concentrate its recovery:

Organisational Restart
Democracy
Community and Voluntary Sector
Economy
Finance

Members have taken the view that the long-term aspects of recovery should be enshrined in the Borough Plan, as this is the Council's governing document for its priorities and activities looking forward. As an example of this, the Council's strategic relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has been a vital part of the emergency response, especially through the establishment of the Community Hub. Although the recovery phase will consider the specific future of the Hub, it will be through the work to establish the next steps of the delivery of the Borough Plan that the further development of the strategic relationship with the VCS should be considered.

Similarly, elsewhere in this report the forthcoming need to respond to the pressing economic impacts of the virus are highlighted and while the activities in the recovery plan will be critically important, respond to immediate need and provide a base for delivery of essential interventions, it is the Borough Plan that will shape the response to Harrow's economic situation in the medium and long term.

Accordingly, the actions for the COVID Recovery plan are shorter term and will then link to the Borough Plan, and its Corporate Delivery Plan, or in some instances to the Councils transformation ambitions.

Attached at Appendix 4 is a high level first draft of the COVID Recovery Plan with owners and actions; this indicates the direction of travel. Operational detail is not included to avoid duplication of documentation held elsewhere. Actions will be refined, made more specific, and measurable targets included in the formal iteration of this plan in September.

The principles by which the recovery plan actions have been established are that:

- The action is uniquely and directly related to COVID
- The action is about getting a service that has been closed down back up and running, wherever possible using the opportunity to improve service models and learn the lessons from the crisis
- This is new and additional work that we have had to do because of COVID that we need to instigate or now wind down/exit from.

Risk Management Implications

Three risks relating to COVID 19 were included on the Quarter 4 Corporate Risk Register, covering the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of core services, a risk relating to the delivery of services to vulnerable people specifically susceptible to the virus and a risk cover the financial impact on the Council, all of which were red rated.

Given the nature of the crisis, decisions needed to be made as a matter of urgency with risks being assessed on a daily basis by Chief Officers meeting as GOLD with daily briefings with the Administration and twice weekly briefings with the Leader of the Opposition Group in order to discuss and seek agreement to the proposed decisions.

Whilst it has not been possible to follow the Council's agreed decision making process the risk that decisions made by Chief Offices during this time would not be supported has been mitigated by these briefings to Members and by the May report to Cabinet to ratify these decisions.

The on-going risks to the provision of services, to the financial impact on the Council as well as the risks associated with the recovery of Council operations post pandemic will be included in the Quarter 1 Corporate Risk Register.

Procurement Implications

The procurement team have worked with and supported the organisation respond both expediently and compliantly to the COVID pandemic. In doing so we have ensured our supply chain has been supported through this unprecedented period.

We support all directorates to ensure the continuity of key services is not at risk and that the programme of procurement tendering continues to be delivered throughout this period.

Procurement Policy Notes that are issued by central government are understood and communicated across the organisation, as is, any best

practice during this period that is identified across the procurement community across London boroughs.

Any procurement required as a result of this paper will be conducted consistent with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Contract Procedure Rules.

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 £44m. 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.

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: 1 July 2020

Name: Hugh Peart Monitoring Officer

Date: 1 July 2020

Name: Nimesh Mehta Head of Procurement

Date: 30 June 2020

Name: Sean Harriss Chief Executive

Date: 1 July 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