

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**24 July 2020**

**COVID-19 – UPDATE**

**Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Service**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Audit and Governance Committee with regard to the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on the areas within the remit of the Committee.

**2. Response Phase**

- 2.1 Through March to June the Council has had in place specific major incident response arrangements to deal with the immediate effects of the Pandemic. Regular updates have been given to elected Members via weekly briefings as well as formal updates to Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny Committees.
- 2.2 From the start of the crisis the priority has been to support our workforce to protect their own health and that of their families and to make sure the council maintains the resilience levels needed to look after residents, particularly our most vulnerable, and continue to deliver critical services at a time when they have been needed most.
- 2.3 We established gold, silver and bronze command structures, the latter comprising a range of appropriate operational groups to look at the detail of maintaining and delivering critical services round the clock.
- 2.4 Multi-agency arrangements were also set up through the Local Resilience Forum.
- 2.5 A specific Covid-19 Risk Register was developed and maintained in support of the above arrangements. The Risk Register was aligned to the Bronze (Operational) Response Groups and sets out the range of key risks facing the City and Council. The Risks considered at this stage are set out at Appendix 1.

### **3. Recovery Phase**

- 3.1 As the numbers of new cases had fallen to very low levels during June 2020, the council determined that this was an appropriate time to move into the 'recovery' phase and the governance arrangements were reviewed and adjusted to take account of this. A Recovery Co-ordinating Group (made up of the Chief Officer Group) supported by a Recovery Working Group are focusing on 'bringing services back on-line' in a safe and managed way.
- 3.2 Specifically with regard to Test, Track and Trace, new groups were established as follows to support delivery of the COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan:
- Local Outbreak Control Board – to provide challenge, support and leadership and to facilitate political ownership and support public facing engagement and communication for the local response to COVID-19.
  - Sunderland Health Protection Board (COVID-19) – to prevent, identify and contain outbreaks to protect the health of the public in Sunderland against COVID-19.
  - Sunderland Strategic Co-ordinating Group – to support delivery of the COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan through resource deployment and by co-ordinating and working with partners across Sunderland.
- 3.3 As well as actively focusing on the recovery effort, we as a council have a vital role to play in reform – looking both at economic and social recovery. This includes the restarting of the economy, dealing with the impact of Covid on education and learning, dealing with increased health inequalities and the general wellbeing of our population.
- 3.4 The Strategic and Corporate Risk Registers shall be updated to reflect the impacts of Covid-19 moving forward.

### **4. Financial Impact of Covid-19**

- 4.1 In order to support local businesses / organisations over £43 million has been paid out in grants under the first Government Business Support Schemes and we are now administering a discretionary grants scheme to try and pick up those businesses and organisations who didn't meet the original criteria.
- 4.2 We've advised on the business rates discount for different sectors, and we agreed rent free periods for tenants in our business centres. We're now in the process of opening those back up where tenants need to get back to work and get their businesses going again.
- 4.3 We have also issued new council tax bills for 2020/21 to the most economically vulnerable households with the funding provided from central Government, with households concerned receiving reductions of up to £150. Sadly, we have seen more than a 15% increase so far in those households now qualifying for Local Council Tax Support during the emergency.

4.4 In relation to managing the Council's own budgets and finances, a lot of work is taking place. At a time when we've had reductions to our income from sources such as car parking, we've incurred significant additional costs in social care and across many other budgets as a direct result of Covid-19. The Government has currently allocated £3.2 billion nationally to local government to cover the general financial impact of Covid. Current returns to MHCLG confirm that we have estimated costs for the city council of over £40 million, for which we have received just over £18 million. As well as leaving a considerable shortfall for this year, we are currently assessing the impact of Covid-19 on the next financial year and we estimate at the moment that the impact will be even greater.



## Appendix 1

### COVID-19 RISK REGISTER - RESPONSE

	Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact		
	1 = Unlikely	1 = Minor		
	2 = Possible	2 = Moderate		
	3 = Likely	3 = Significant		
	4 = Almost Certain	4 = Critical		
ID	Risk Description	Impact	Likelihood	Rating
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>				
G001	Roles and Responsibilities with regard to responding to Covid-19 are not clearly understood	4	1	4
G002	Decisions not taken quickly or based upon available intelligence	4	1	4
G003	Adequate records not kept of decisions and actions	4	2	8
G004	Objectives and priorities of Council and other Partner(s) may conflict or are not aligned.	4	1	4
G005	Legal powers to make decisions may not be in place due to urgency requirements	4	1	4
G005	Unable to forecast the potential for future waves.	4	2	8
G006	Delivery of the City Plan and Council services are impacted by COVID 19.	4	3	12
<b>BEREAVEMENT AND DEATH MANAGEMENT</b>				
B001	Capacity of Hospital Mortuary is not able to deal with increased demand.	4	2	8
B002	Existing infrastructure is not able to function on a continuous basis.	4	2	8
B003	Crematorium/cemetery service unable to cope with increased demand	4	2	8
B004	Funeral Directors do not have the capacity to cope with increased demand, including additional hours at cemetery/crematorium	4	2	8
B005	Unable to resource the increased demand in the temporary resting and crematorium facilities	4	2	8
B006	Covid-19 remains infectious for a period of time following death within the temporary resting facility.	4	2	8
B007	Arrival of new Nightingale hospital within the City could increase demand on strained Council services	4	2	8
B008	Difficulties in providing a sensitive, dignified and respectful service for the deceased and mourners whilst implementing social distancing rules	4	1	4
<b>ADULT SOCIAL CARE &amp; HOUSING</b>				

A001	Reduction in the availability of appropriately trained social care workers.	4	1	4
A002	Increase in the scope and demand for Health and Social Care services	4	2	8
A003	PPE is not readily available to support service delivery (also applies to Children's Services)	4	1	4
A004	Care Homes unable to support residents through reduced staffing levels	4	2	8
A005	Sunderland Care and Support Ltd. (SCAS) does not have the resources to deal with demand	4	2	8
A006	Unable to provide appropriate emergency accommodation to enable people to protect themselves from Covid 19	4	2	8
A007	The Probation service are relying on LA's to find accommodation for newly released prisoners	4	2	8
A008	A reduced level of referrals and self-reported disclosures may impair the ability of children and adult services to identify, assess and respond to vulnerable children, families and adults. (See also CH006)	4	4	16
<b>CHILDRENS SERVICES</b>				
CH005	A reduced level of referrals and self-reported disclosures may impair the ability of children and adult services to identify, assess and respond to vulnerable children, families and adults. (See also A008)	4	4	16
<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT</b>				
BS001	Local traders (Business to Consumers) including Council tenants are experiencing a marked decrease in turnover	3	4	12
BS002	Levels of business / trade reduces for 'Business to Business' city businesses	3	4	12
BS005	Automotive and advanced manufacturing sector production reduced or halted	4	4	16
BS006	The negative economic impact on the city's economy is significant and when the lockdown is lifted, not all businesses will be able to recover	4	3	12
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>				
PH001	Public and staff are not provided with appropriate information to protect themselves	4	1	4
PH002	Providers of commissioned health services and the wider health system are not provided with appropriate Public Health information to protect themselves and others.	4	1	4
PH003	Mandatory Public Health functions, as defined under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 cannot be discharged due to the consequences of the pandemic.	4	2	8
PH004	Non-Mandatory Public health functions, as defined under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 cannot be discharged due to the consequences of the pandemic.	4	2	8
PH005	Impact of Covid-19 will increase health inequalities.	4	4	16

PH006	Unable to contain the virus and reduce the spread of the infection across Sunderland	4	3	12
<b>HR and H&amp;S</b>				
HR001	Staff absence due to Illness, lockdown or isolation (including multiple cases identified through the Contact Tracing App). Travel restrictions	4	1	4
HR002	Unable to quantify real time staffing numbers or make informed decision about re-deployment of staff.	4	1	4
HR003	Insufficient staff to undertake critical functions.	4	2	8
HR004	Staff not able to freely move around to deliver critical functions, in event of lockdown	4	1	4
HR005	Trade Unions not engaged with regard to flexibilities around staff	3	1	3
HR006	Arrangements are not in place to support Home Working	4	1	4
HR007	New ways of working adversely impact on the physical and mental health of staff.	4	2	8
HR008	Additional Risk Assessments are not undertaken to identify hazards and control actions	4	2	8
HR009	Crowded areas / events increase spread of the virus	4	1	4
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>				
C001	Appropriate information is not supplied to reduce the spread of the COVID 19 virus	4	1	4
C002	Members, Employees, Partners not kept up to date with the emerging position regarding Council services / activity.	4	1	4
<b>FINANCE</b>				
F001	Funding is not available to meet the exceptional costs and lost income that will be incurred responding to Covid-19.	4	4	16
F002	The overall costs and lost income of responding to Covid 19 are not fully captured.	4	1	4
F003	Unable to pay providers/supplies promptly. Not always able to meet suppliers' expectations for advance payments	4	1	4
F004	Supplier Failure for niche markets in both private and third sectors	4	2	8
F005	Increased exposure to fraud and theft (including Cyber fraud)	4	2	8
F006	Impact of Covid-19 creates long term Budget pressures	4	4	16
<b>OTHER AREAS</b>				
BC001	Shortages of medicines and medical supplies	4	1	4

BC002	Delays in delivering basic food items to market, exacerbated by stockpiling	4	1	4
BC003	Fuel shortage	4	1	4
BC004	Delays within Council supply chains (i.e. machinery and parts)	4	2	8
BC005	Delay in supply of construction materials	4	2	8
BC006	Unable to gain access to Council Buildings (where required)	4	1	4
BC007	Unable to provide staff with the appropriate protective equipment due to unreliable supply chain	4	1	4
BC008	Unable to maintain an integrated transport system across the City.	4	3	12
BC009	Social unrest brought about by shortages of food etc.	4	1	4
BC010	Individuals disembarking at Port of Sunderland who have contracted the COVID-19 virus	4	1	4
BC011	IT infrastructure is not fully utilised to support alternative ways of working.	4	1	4
BC012	Major contractor fails	4	2	8