

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Public Service Reform Policy & Accountability Committee

Date: 28/07/2020

Subject: Covid-19 response and recovery

Report of: Linda Jackson, Director of Covid-19 Response and Recovery,
Dr Nicola Lang, Director of Public Health
Steve Hollingworth, Assistant Director Leisure, Sports and Culture

Responsible Director: Lisa Redfern, Strategic Director of Social Care

Summary

This report summarises the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It sets out the interim governance arrangements established to enable the Council to take quick and decisive action in effectively managing the impacts of the coronavirus as they arise and our actions for recovery as lockdown is lifted.

This global situation is continuously evolving and as such this report presents a snapshot, in time, based on information available at the time of writing.

Recommendations

1. That the PSR PAC note the report and comment on:
 - the Council's activity to tackle Covid-19 pandemic and help keep residents, staff and workers safe in the borough
 - the Council's recovery work and learning as well as preparedness for any second wave and/or localised outbreaks.

Wards Affected: All

H&F Priorities	
Building shared prosperity	Through the recovery programme we are working with stakeholders to re-energise our economy.
Creating a compassionate council	Throughout the pandemic, compassion has driven people and their communities to support each other. Departments have worked across the Council to deliver services to those most in need, providing substantially more support than many authorities.
Doing things with residents, not to them	Teams across the Council have engaged with residents to support social distancing campaigns. The CAN & MAGs are revolutionising the way we

	work communities, with residents providing support to one another. The recovery programme also seeks to develop new models of delivery through co-production.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Whilst the pandemic has resulted in significant costs, officers have ensured value for money e.g. making best use of grants, the workforce and using learnings from the Covid-19 outbreak to reimagine working practices.
Taking pride in H&F	The pandemic has shown how much pride and community ownership there is across the borough.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Governance structures and workstreams

Appendix 2 - Challenges and achievements through Covid-19

Appendix 3 – Recovery Plan

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

1. Introduction

1.1 On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. On 12 January 2020, it was announced that a novel coronavirus had been identified in samples obtained from cases, and that initial analysis of virus genetic sequences suggested that this was the cause of the outbreak. This virus became referred to as SARS-CoV-2, and the associated disease named Covid-19 by the WHO on 11 February 2020.

2. Governance arrangements

2.1 In January 2020, the Public Health team started monitoring the growing pandemic and as the global pandemic unfolded, the Council commenced swift actions in line with civil contingency response structures. The borough emergency planning functions were stood up, and a detailed and challenging plan of work was embarked upon to reduce the rates of infection in the borough.

2.2 On 12 March 2020, the Chief Executive appointed a seconded Deputy Director of Social Care into to the role of Director of Covid-19 response, and a

governance structure was established together with business continuity arrangements to protect critical services.

- 2.3 Formal links into the region through the LRF (Local Resilience Forum)¹ were established as a Major Incident was declared, in line with guidance. Other emergency measures included increasing the Chief Executive's delegated authority to spend for Covid-19-related matters activities to £2m for capital and revenue expenditure.
- 2.4 A Covid-19 business continuity framework set out and risk assessed priority services to ensure focus on maintaining those most critical services. This was organised through five initial workstreams:
- **Strategic group** (H&F Gold senior officers' group which served as the overall decision-making group, in addition H&F Borough Resilience Forum (including partner agencies) and West London Alliance Chief Executives Local Resilience Board.
 - **Tactical/ Operational group** (Silver officers' group & Horizon scanning group) – focus on delivery of business-critical services².
 - **Residents & community** - Communications, engagement, reassurance, services to shielded residents, mobilisation of volunteer residents through Community Aid Network, food support and support to vulnerable families and residents.
 - **Workforce resilience** - during lockdown move to home working for 85/90% of the workforce; enhanced office/workplace cleaning regime; assisted parking and accommodation offers for key workers delivering critical services.
 - **Partners/ economy and reputation** – liaison and support including priority parking support to NHS, schools and key partners.
- 2.5 These governance arrangements enabled the Council to more easily support residents, monitor the impacts of the pandemic and provide ongoing advice and support to Council staff. The Council at all stages followed Public Health England (PHE) advice and guidance, having regular meetings to continually review the situation. Appendix 1 shows the governance structures and workstreams established to manage the response.

3. Immediate service impacts

- 3.1 A series of important and significant decisions were taken in the first weeks of the crisis, ahead of the government guidance - which had and continues to have a major impact both organisationally and financially on the Council. These included an earlier move from contain to delay phase where we moved quickly to stop routine council meetings and services:
- Ceasing in person council meetings and changing them to virtual meetings e.g. the Harwood Rd community consultation
 - Closure of schools

- Closing all Council buildings and sending all staff to work from home (aside from a very small number of critical staff who worked on rota in offices)
- Moving all services to focus on supporting only critical services
- Closing all the Council's Libraries
- Closing all Leisure Centres
- Closing all construction sites in the area including our capital scheme
- Stopping all Car Park Charges
- Closure of 145 Kings Street to the public
- Closure of all day, children's services and community centres.

3.2 These decisions were taken at pace to ensure the safety and protection of the community, individuals and staff. The implications both direct, indirect and financially, however, are likely to last for a significant period.

4. The creation of H&F CAN - compassionate communities for the future

4.1 The Council quickly established the H&F Community Aid Network (H&F CAN). This has supported residents to maintain their safety, health and wellbeing through a dedicated contact centre and to gain access to practical support, personal shoppers, food parcels, information and advice. As around an initial 1,500 residents were advised by their GPs/Consultants to shield within their own homes for a minimum of 12 weeks, this required the Council to set up a separate shielded call centre staffed with 100 officers, all of whom volunteered to be redeployed into the contact centre.

4.2 H&F CAN has been hugely successful, inspiring and supporting residents to look after themselves and each other. This project has taken on a new importance in our community resilience response. In total, 2,300 residents have stepped forward to support other people in their community. Some of the highlights include:

- Shielded residents - 8,892¹ contacted through H&F contact centre, development of peer support opportunities through the H&F CAN volunteers (2,300 joined). There have been 18,116 hits on our C19 website page and 6,109 calls to the CAN hotline.
- Non-shielding residents in need were assisted through community efforts to distribute food parcels (125,000 meals sent out from H&F Foodbank - more than across all of 2019) to households, including those in temporary accommodation.

5. Political governance and oversight

5.1 In March, a decision was taken to cease all political meetings to enable Councillors to maintain social distancing and support their constituents. Throughout the crisis, the Leader and Deputy Leader have kept in frequent

¹ Statistics on CAN/Shield/food accurate as of 24/06/20

contact with the Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), and the Directors of Public Health and Covid-19 Response and Recovery, including fortnightly, Strategic Update Meetings. Cabinet portfolio holders have also kept in very close, often, at least daily contact with their SLT Directors.

- 5.2 The Leader has been very active in co-ordinating key partners in the response to the incident which has included:
- Speaking regularly with other local Council Leaders
 - Chairing of the West London Alliance (WLA) Economic Prosperity Board with key businesses and business groups
 - Actively lobbying local and national politicians on safety measures and financial concerns
 - Undertaking several local and national press interviews passing on guidance to residents, and highlighting the Council's Covid-19 response and the resulting financial difficulties.

6. Financial impacts and emergency funding

- 6.1 The government's position on funding the financial pressures faced by Councils in responding to, and as a result of, the Covid-19 pandemic has lacked clarity and has evolved during the response period. Initial representations that Councils would be fully funded for the impact were replaced with separate grant funding announcements and allocations.
- 6.2 A separate detailed report on the Financial Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council has been reported to the Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts Policy and Accountability Committee. In summary, that report sets out that, based on confirmed allocations to date, an adverse impact of at least £27 million was forecast. Since then, the latest funding announcement of 2 July suggests this impact will be reduced. Full details and allocations are not yet available.

Table 1 – Financial impact of Covid-19 on Hammersmith & Fulham (June MCHLG Return)

	£m
Expenditure	14.430
Income loss (fees and charges and commercial)	16.218
Income loss (council tax and business rates)	7.900
Total expenditure and income loss	38.548
Confirmed un-ringfenced emergency Covid-19 grant	(11.535)
Additional un-ringfenced grant and partial compensation for income loss (July 2 MCHLG announcement)	TBC
Grant shortfall	27.013
Housing Revenue Account element of shortfall	2.369

- 6.3 The forecast is based on our best estimate of costs and revenue losses offset by confirmed grant allocations at a point in time in a constantly changing and unpredictable environment. The forecast continues to change and be updated

as the pandemic, and government and the Council's response to it, evolves. If the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is not fully funded by government, these costs will fall to the council and need to be met from either reduction of spending in other areas and budgets or reserves. Any funding from reserves could provide only a short-term solution and the Council would need to put plans in place to replenish these to ensure future financial resilience.

- 6.4 The Council has also received other specific and ringfenced grants for activities during the pandemic. For example, business grants and test and trace funding. Further details are included in the Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts Policy and Accountability Committee report.

7. Workforce

- 7.1 In response to the pandemic, many changes have been required to enable the Council's staff to continue to operate as effectively as possible and to ensure they continue to support local communities, businesses and partners.
- 7.2 With a few exceptions such as Digital Services and Social Worker duty teams, all office-based staff have worked remotely from home since 23 March, in accordance with government guidance. The Council's technology infrastructure and resources have stood up well, enabling up to 1,700 members of staff to work remotely.
- 7.3 The People & Talent (P&T) team have led:
- Staff redeployment scheme (Talent Pool) – 180 staff redeployed to support Priority 1 services² plus all staff deployed onto business-critical activity only.
 - Changes to HR policy related advice and guidance to support and align with a Pan-London HR response to Covid-19 (managing staff in emergencies).
 - An agile approach to staff wellbeing and resilience – massive programme of engagement and support with a dedicated intranet site 'build my resilience' for access to all tools and communications. Wellbeing Wednesdays has proven extremely successful with staff.
 - A revised approach to staff communications and weekly staff briefings
 - A new 'appraisal lite' scheme designed by H&F Way staff volunteers to enable performance conversations this year.
 - A robust vacancy and agency management procedure and process
 - New – 'People plan on a page' (to deliver the People Strategy in a pandemic in 2020/21) to inform the recovery programme:
 - **Creating our new normal** - 24/7 business, reshaping organisational operating models, targeted voluntary redundancy, agile and flexible working practices.
 - **Work anywhere** – operational plan aligned to the new property strategy, 75% staff working from home, remote working solutions,

² Priority 1 services are defined in the Councils business Continuity planning guidance

standardise a WFH IT kit, back to work packs, new vision narrative, new behaviours/nudges, new engagement solutions.

- **Workplace readiness programme** – Covid19-secure activity including; reorganising our buildings, signage and practices to bring people back to work safely, carrying out service and employee risk assessments, workplace desk allocations departments, 1,700 staff remain at home for the present time, ensuring staff have the right equipment, support, training and workstation set up at home.
- **Recruiting great people** – earn whilst you learn academy, revised recruitment, induction and onboarding, sponsorship programme, career pathways, employer brand, diversity and inclusion.
- **Workforce efficiency** - going further faster on savings plans (agency reduction, lean management, T&C's).

8. Business continuity

8.1 A comprehensive Covid-19 Incident Log has recorded all key issues and decisions to ensure they are acted upon and a detailed account is retained for future reference, evaluation and feedback. A SharePoint³ Coronavirus Co-ordination Group site has enabled easy and accessible sharing of documents, information and data among key officers. All the information regarding the Council's approach, response and key decisions relating to the pandemic can be found in this site.

8.2 Sitreps⁴ have provided daily or weekly updates to the Tactical Group about Business-Critical Functions, all of which are saved in SharePoint and recorded on the incident log where necessary. In addition, with its command and control function, the BECC⁵ receives escalations from services which can't be resolved through regular management arrangements. The BECC reports these issues up to Gold for decision/resolution. So far, the BECC has logged, analysed and actioned over 2,772 logged items.

9. Performance dashboard and risk management planning

9.1 The Council has an intelligence-led approach to monitoring performance and the management of Covid-19 in the borough. A range of dashboards have been built to monitor infection rates and impacts on communities, for operational responses such as CAN, Shield, Personal Protective equipment (PPE) and workforce resilience. In addition, Council departments have a range of performance dashboards to monitor service delivery.

³ SharePoint is a document management and collaboration tool developed by Microsoft that is used for internal purposes to assist with bringing an organisation together.

⁴ A Sitrep (Situation Report) is a form of status reporting that provides decision-makers and readers with a quick understanding of the current situation

⁵ BECC- Borough emergency control room

- 9.2 The council has also maintained a Covid-19 risk register, which is used in tactical group to monitor services and communities and in turn inform our ability to horizon scan throughout the pandemic. This has allowed the Council to stay one step ahead.

10. Challenges and achievements March – July 2020

- 10.1 To reduce the length of this report, Appendix 2 highlights some of the key challenges and achievements for each of the directorates during this time.

11. Recovery

- 11.1 At the start of May 2020, the Chief Executive and SLT started plans to move to the next phase of emergency planning leadership in planning for the recovery of the Council and borough. This started with extension of the Director of Covid-19 secondment to oversee recovery and the establishment of a virtual team to co-ordinate the recovery programme. The governance structure for recovery and the strategic plan is attached at Appendix 1.
- 11.2 The Recovery Board is chaired by the Chief Executive, its objectives are:
- Provide strategic officer leadership to determine H&F's recovery response
 - Play a significant role in ensuring the coordinated delivery of the recovery response, both internally within the Council and externally throughout the borough
 - Influence local, regional and national partners to drive H&F's recovery
 - Ensure evidence gathering, analysis and best practice sharing to inform the future response methods
 - Ensure there is strong leadership in decisions that impact on the workforce and those decisions are fully risk managed and seek to maximise the skills of the workforce
 - Provide clarity on the future direction of all major Council services against the restore, retain, re-imagine or remove framework.
- 11.3 The Board's key priorities include:
- Economic impact, support and recovery - including stabilisation, stimulation, and development of a more resilient, inclusive and green economy
 - Support for vulnerable residents - including addressing family poverty and worklessness
 - Health and Social Care - including transformation and integration to a 'new normal', working closely with NHS and other partners
 - Relationships - including with West London and wider London authorities ensuring consistency where required
 - Risk management and mitigation of the transition to recovery
 - The Council's financial resilience - both revenue and capital
 - The Council's workforce resilience - both resources and skills

- The Council's transformation - including the sustainability of new ways of working developed during the response to Covid-19; how the Council may adapt to a phased release (and ramping up) of the lockdown and what this means for service delivery.
- Evidence base and analysis - including closely monitoring impacts and the effectiveness of responses, and informing decision making on the above areas.

12. Contact tracing and prevention

- 12.1 The council has also set up a Covid-19 Board, chaired by the Director of Covid-19 and the Director of Public Health, accountable to the recovery board. Many outbreak plans have been developed to cover different outbreak settings such as schools, care homes, transport, and faith settings and they are all being individually tested. This will support the council to proactively manage confirmed cases in the borough.
- 12.2 It is critical that the Council accesses as much information as possible to enable us to manage and provide appropriate and timely support to residents. It is this principle that has led us to enter into a partnership with Imperial NHS Trust, to share anonymised information. This will allow us not only to respond to any outbreak, but through using data we can take proactive and preventative measures and target areas of our communities most at risk.