



Purpose: For Information

# Committee report

Committee	<b>CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
Date	<b>9 JUNE 2020</b>
Title	<b>ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19</b>
Report of	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>

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## **Executive Summary**

1. The United Kingdom, along with many other countries across the world have been faced with the need to provide a rapid emergency response to the management of an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.
2. Described as the worst crisis facing the country since World War II, the impact felt within local government and the national health service has been substantial, not least in the speed of response but also in the extent of the actions required to support and protect its communities. This report sets out the collaborative response afforded by the Isle of Wight Council, Isle of Wight NHS Trust and CCG in conjunction with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum.

## **Background**

3. 19 December 2019 saw the reporting of a newly discovered coronavirus to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Wuhan, China. In little over a month, WHO had announced that this was a public health emergency of international concern. In a little over two months, the first cases of people being tested positive for the coronavirus in England was announced.
4. The severity of the situation that would emerge and the advent of a crisis not seen on such a scale since World War II has had a significant impact on local authorities and the national health service.
5. Coronavirus is a group of respiratory viruses, this one is known as Covid-19 had rapidly become widespread and by the beginning of March 2020, just three months from the initial reporting of its existence, the UK Government were announcing the first death related to Covid-19 and began setting out measures to control and contain the spread of the virus. By 20 March 2020, after a series of isolation steps to delay the spread of infection, lockdown measures had begun to also be put in place. A full timetable of events relating to the pandemic is shown at Appendix A for information.
6. At the beginning of March 2020, as a matter of national, regional and local concern, bringing potential significant impact and having substantial resource implications, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum (LRF) as a multi-agency strategic

co-ordination group, initiated its emergency response plan to deal with Covid-19. The LRF as a non-statutory body serves to provide a mechanism by which a collaborative and effective crisis response can be undertaken. Its operating model, membership and emergency management structure is shown at Appendix B for illustration purposes.

7. The work of the LRF, is by necessity underpinned by organisational local emergency management structures to inform, plan and deliver the actions required to deal with the situation. For the Isle of Wight Council, the emergency management structure stood up in accordance with the council's emergency response plans has compiled of:
  - A Strategic Command Group (commonly known as Gold), chaired by the chief executive, meeting twice weekly and consisting the corporate management team. The strategic command group provides the overall direction to the response and is the decision-making body where the allocation of resources, expertise required, or co-ordination response is beyond the capacity of the tactical group.
  - A Tactical Command Group (commonly known as Silver), chaired by the assistant chief executive, meeting twice weekly and consisting of representatives of tactical support teams and affected services. The role of the tactical command group has been to co-ordinate the council's response to Covid-19 and to work to the government's reasonable worst-case scenario and plan to mitigate this. Its work has been supported by eight tactical cells that have focussed on specific areas of response activity. The tactical command group structure is shown at Appendix C for illustration purposes.
  - An Island Tactical Co-ordination Group (ITCG), is part of the LRF structure and serves to devise and deliver a multi-agency tactical plan for the Island as a whole and considers the impact beyond that of the immediate incident, co-ordinating resources accordingly and will gather information and intelligence on what is occurring; develop a joint working strategy based on known risks; determine priorities for allocating available resources and identify and request any additional resources required to deliver the tactical plan. Membership comprises of relevant multi-agency representatives key to informing, planning and delivery of the response plan. In addition to the usual membership, for the response to Covid-19, this forum has also included cross Solent ferry operators. The ITCG established an Island logistics cell specifically to manage the emergency provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health and social care services on the Island. ITCG also led the decision to establish a working group to initiate a Ministry of Defence (MOD) mobile testing unit and subsequently the satellite testing facility located a Medina Leisure Centre. The ITCG command group structure is shown at Appendix D for illustration purposes.
8. In a more usual emergency response, the Chief Executive would liaise with the Leader and relevant Cabinet members to keep them aware of the work being undertaken and its impact in response to this emergency. In this instance, given the length of time of the response the Cabinet has been meeting informally to consider the council's response with the Chief Executive who has also briefed group leaders twice weekly from week commencing 23 March 2020.

**Our response: *Community Support:***

9. The work of the silver community cell saw the introduction of a community helpline which was launched on 20 March 2020 for people who have no local network of friends or family to support them while self-isolating. Operating on a seven day a week, 9.00

am – 5.00 pm basis the service undertakes a three-stage process of triage, co-ordinate and respond.

10. The community cell also took the lead in making available the necessary support and access to essential services, food and medical supplies for those people who were identified as being medically extremely vulnerable and required additional shielding measures. This has necessitated contact being made with every islander identified within this category and to undertake frequent 'check-in' wellbeing contacts for those who are without other sources of support or regular contact. Any unanswered calls after three attempts to make contact, initiates welfare checks to be undertaken. This process has not been without its challenges due to some data quality issues of the information being received from government (as many had no contact or out of date contact details); an inability to cross reference resident data provided and reference numbers given for food supply lists; initial sources of data being received from three different bodies, none of which corresponded with each other causing duplication and the sheer numbers of those being added to the shielded list. The initial indication was that the Island had 2,700 residents who would require shielding, but this has continued to grow on a week by week basis.
11. The process and community cell provisions outlining the extent of the multi-agency approach and the types of issues being presented are shown at Appendix E for information. A brief overview of the statistics of recorded activity is also set out below for information.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>22/05/20</b>
Helpline calls	Average number of helpline calls each day	109
	Total number of helpline calls to date	6,787
Helpline issues	Total number of issues responded to date	4,890
IWC emergency food parcels	Total number of emergency parcels to date	415
Shielding	Number of residents currently identified as required to shield	5,646
Shielded Residents contacted by IWC	Number of Shielded Residents contacted	5,509
	Total Number of calls made to date (includes regular call back 'check in's)	12,328
Ongoing 'check in' contact	Number of residents requiring regular ongoing 'check in' calls	2,112
Welfare visits	Total number of welfare visits to date	342
Government food box eligibility	Number of residents who have opted to receive a government food box this week	782

12. The helpline has also been complemented by a dedicated website to signpost people to sources of support and help and as a means to call for volunteers to assist the Island's support efforts <https://www.iowcoronavirus.co.uk/>. Through partnership working between the council and with credit to voluntary organisations who have mobilised required support services to avoid any duplication of effort, there are 27

community hubs in operation across the entire Island, including those established by town and parish councils providing a much-needed additional source of support to local residents.

13. Some 1500 volunteers are registered through Community Action IW who have identified they were willing to support community efforts. The response has been exceptional. A survey has now been undertaken to identify the skills and types of volunteering work they are willing to undertake. The NHS volunteer system has also been made live for the Isle of Wight with referrals being made to it for community support needs.
14. There has also been a tremendous effort from local organisations, instigating fundraising efforts such as WightAid to support local groups. Some £60,000 has been donated to charities thus far.
15. Medina Leisure Centre was set up as the distribution centre for emergency food provision and receipt of the initial drop-off point of national food parcels under the governments scheme.
16. On 6 April 2020, a [third sector lifeline](#) fund was established to enable not for profit and community interest companies on the Island to continue providing critical community support services in response to Covid-19, whilst awaiting government funding. Grants of up to £30,000 were made available by application. As of 26 May 2020, 8 applications have been approved and processed through to payment at a total of £102,495.
17. A community essential shopping and delivery fund was also established to enable community groups to support vulnerable Island residents by advancing monies to pay for and cover some of the costs associated with delivering essential shopping. As of 26 May, 22 applications have been approved and processed through to payment at a total of £115,100.
18. On 11 March 2020, government announced that it would provide local authorities with grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. The council received £1m and has so far paid out £725,000 having paid out to those in receipt of local council tax support (£150 per claimant) on the Island, the balance is to be held for future cases of hardship as they develop the longer the crisis goes on.

### **Our Response: *Preventing the spread of infection***

19. The supply and distribution of personal protective equipment as a measure to mitigate the risk to council staff of virus transmission and to prevent the risk of onward transmission has been a paramount consideration for the council as well as to ensure that PPE usage was in accordance with government guidance and effectively communicated to those who needed it.
20. In collaboration with the LRF, the council has been pro-active in its approach to ensuring that adequate emergency supplies of PPE have been available to the Island as well as in maintaining its own purchase of supplies from available suppliers. The council secured its own sufficient stock of PPE at the beginning of the emerging pandemic which put us in a good place to operate right from the start. As of 20 May 2020, a total of five emergency supply deliveries have been received from the LRF. Medina Leisure Centre was designated as the council's PPE depot and emergency

supply distribution centre. A helpline for emergency supplies was set up for all care settings across the Island and some 292 emergency requests have been actioned comprising of:

Type of PPE	Number Issued:
Face masks	5,904
Aprons	9,010
Gloves	16,714
Hand sanitizer	10.54 litres
Disposable eye protection	465
Re-usable eye protection	45

21. The programme of testing for the COVID 19 is key for understanding the spread of disease and prevent further cases. The testing programme has been developed over the life of the epidemic. Through the ITCG, a Ministry of Defence (MOD) mobile testing facility was established at Medina Leisure Centre, with testing capacity for up to 200 tests per day for those showing symptoms of the virus. This facility was made available to all the eligible Island's keyworkers during the period 25 – 26 April 2020 and returned on 28 April until the fixed satellite facility operated by NHS staff was put in place from 5 May 2020. Eligibility criteria for testing has changed throughout the response period. In the 'contain' phase testing was for people who had travelled to affected areas or those in contact with cases who were symptomatic. The next phase testing was for those admitted to hospital who were symptomatic and for potential outbreaks in care homes. Then there was a move towards a programme of testing for key workers to support business continuity and finally testing has been made available for everyone symptomatic aged over 5.
22. Island residents have been at the centre of the development of a new contact tracing app as part of the government's plan to tackle Covid-19 and to underpin the safe easement of social distancing measures that have been put in place. The app, developed by the NHSX is designed to help those who have reported symptoms to get a swab test and anonymously alert those people they have been in contact with as well as to gain advice about what to do next, including isolation. The NHS covid-19 app soft launch with NHS and Isle of Wight Council staff commenced on 5 May 2020, followed shortly after by a wider roll out to Island residents on 7 May 2020. As of 18 May 2020, some 53,000 downloads of the app have been made.
23. Government are now developing a wider national test and trace programme in which the council will continue to have a role to play in its delivery and roll out. Under the Director of Public Health, the models of testing are being reviewed to ensure they meet local needs. 3625 tests have been undertaken in the testing centre on the Isle of Wight. At this point in time the holistic view of testing has not been possible.

### **Our Response: *Working with Island Businesses***

24. On 24 March 2020 government, in response to Covid-19 announced that there would be small business grant provision to passport to qualifying local businesses and the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. A total of £62.8m was allocated to the Isle of Wight to provide:
  - £10,000 to all business premises claiming Small Business Rate Relief.
  - £10,000 to businesses premises in the retail, hospitality sector with a

- rateable value below £15,000.
  - £25,000 to business premises in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector with a rateable value of between £15,000 and £51,000.
25. There are approximately 4,589 hereditaments that were identified as being eligible for this grant funding and all Island business ratepayers were written to make them aware of the grants available to them and the process for application. In addition, during March and April, the council conducted an extensive advertising campaign using print, radio and digital channels as well as to work with the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and Visit Isle of Wight to assist with the flow of response.
  26. There were discrepancies identified between the number of hereditaments used by government for the purposes of calculation of the total grant funding allocation for the Island and the actual number of those likely to be eligible. This is in part is due to the wide range of rateable hereditaments included within government returns, such as bus stops, bus shelters and hoardings, advertising billboards, static beach front telescopes etc. General exclusions from eligibility include hereditaments that are occupied for personal uses (such as stables, and storage facilities), car parks and parking spaces and businesses in liquidation or dissolved as of 11 March 2020 and only one grant per hereditament. Other properties identified as not being eligible included warehouses and local branches of national chains including supermarkets, betting shops and pharmacies).
  27. As of 26 May 2020, 83% of the total amount of the grant has been paid out to eligible properties at a total of £42,850m. An appeals process was also put in place to allow those businesses who had been identified as ineligible to present further evidence in support of their claim. This resulted in some businesses being reassessed and the relevant grant paid.
  28. In addition to the media campaign, a more targeted approach has been undertaken to ensure that businesses were aware of the grant availability and application process. Some 1,999 letters were posted to the business addresses of those properties identified as being eligible for the available grants and from whom no details to make payments had been received. Follow up emails for businesses where such contact details were available were sent and more recently a team of 10 redeployed staff were assigned to approach 838 businesses directly by phone (which has required staff to search for telephone numbers for records where there is only a postal address by using google, companies house and other sources of information). Whilst it is apparent that some businesses were still unaware of their eligibility for the grants it was also helping to identify those businesses that are no longer trading from that addresses or properties being used for personal use such as holiday/second homes.
  29. Government also made available a funded 12-month business rates holiday for all premises in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector (where the rateable value was below £500,000) for the financial year 2020/21.
  30. On 1 May 2020, in recognition that there were a number of small businesses that effectively “fall through the gap” in the grant funding criteria, government announced the provision of an additional Local Authority Discretionary Grant scheme, aimed at small and micro businesses who had not been eligible previously and particularly businesses operating in shared spaces; regular market traders; small charity properties and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates.

31. On the basis that the local authority, having taken all reasonable steps to provide grants to eligible businesses from the small business, retail, hospitality and leisure sector grants highlighted above, is likely to have unspent funds, then it will be expected that a total of 5% of their allocation can be directed towards discretionary payments. The council is currently finalising its intended policy and approach through a property hardship fund for businesses that are not currently covered by the business grant of up to a maximum of £10,000 and a micro business hardship fund for self-employed businesses that evidence short term risk of closure due to Covid-19 and who are not eligible under the government's self-employed scheme of up to a maximum of £5,000.
32. Through membership of the Island Tactical Co-ordination Group, it has been possible to maintain regular dialogue with the three ferry operators to ensure lifeline services for goods, emergency health transport, key workers and medical travel could be maintained. With the council's assistance to highlight the imperative nature of the cross Solent travel for the Island, and with collaboration from ferry operators, a letter from the Chair of the Isle of Wight Transport Infrastructure Board to the Department for Transport offered a proposal for an integrated timetable for car and passenger ferry operation and requesting funding to ensure continued service provision to avoid any catastrophic impact. As a result, special provisions were successfully agreed and put in place to enable the passporting of a Department for Transport Grant to be paid directly to them.

### **Our Response: *Maintaining Critical Services***

33. Government issued a procurement policy notice to public bodies for the payment of their suppliers to ensure service continuity during and after the Covid-19 outbreak. The council's procurement and payments service quickly responded by putting in a process to enable commissioners and contract managers to work with any 'at risk' supplier where goods and services were either reduced or paused temporarily so that they were enabled to cope with the current crisis and be in a position to resume normal service delivery, as well as to fulfil their contractual obligations when the outbreak is over. A total of ten suppliers were identified to be in the at-risk category and with payment relief measures put in place. Emergency payment procedures were also put in place to provide faster and advance payments for businesses who were providing goods and services during the Covid-19 crisis period.
34. Staffing capacity has been of significant concern and a focus of priority attention to make sure that front-line services were adequately equipped to respond and maintain a response to the needs of vulnerable people within our communities. All libraries, museums and leisure centres were closed to the public and this provided a valuable additional capacity resource for redeployment into the community support helpline and some front-line services. A process was instigated to RAG rate the availability of staff to be redeployed and a questionnaire distributed to all those who could be made available to identify the types of alternative work that they could undertake. This mechanism through a three-times a week report monitoring staffing levels in critical services has been utilised to enable the deployment of resources to where most needed. Some 200 staff in total have been re-deployed in some form over the period.
35. The overall response of all staff during the period of this emergency has been tremendous and are to be congratulated for their efforts. Many staff have gone over and above what could reasonably be expected of them and the genuine kindness and willingness to assist has been immensely humbling.

36. During the period of emergency working, it has been necessary to make temporary adjustments to working practices, policies and procedures and in response there has been a wide range of pandemic guidance documents prepared to support both managers and staff in carrying out their duties and ensuring their safety and wellbeing during this time as well as providing advice and guidance on the various government initiatives relating to staffing matters. A wide range of frequently asked questions have been prepared and published in addition to supplement the regular chief executive and corporate communications made available to staff.

### **Our Response: Communications**

37. The council has undertaken an extensive media campaign to warn and inform the Island's residents about the impact of the virus and in support of our key objectives throughout the pandemic. The council's communication team have undertaken seven day a week council Facebook pages monitoring, which saw within the first 28 days a 478% increase in page likes; a 1,650% increase in Facebook activity and a 418% increase in the number of people that saw posts at least once together with approximately 100,000 post engagements where people clicked on links provided; shared information or gave a reaction to posts.

38. In addition to social media channels, there have been regular bespoke articles and adverts undertaken through radio and other local press outlets and the Leader of the Council has engaged in video messaging through social media. A council Covid-19 leaflet was also circulated to all households.

39. Once people had grown accustomed to the situation, the initial surge of interest on social media began to slow down although there has been significant continued interest in practical information for residents, such as that relating to waste collections; testing sites; the community helpline and library services.

40. Other campaigns have been undertaken to keep residents informed including the launch of the tracing app; re-opening of the waste recycling sites; case studies about the wide variety of outreach work taking place in schools; the VE day celebrations and promoting the national plans that involved staying at home. Appendix F provides examples of some of the campaigns that have been undertaken.

### **Our Response: Children's Services**

41. To maintain delivery of critical children's social care services a three-phase approach has been developed to enable deployment of staff to areas which are in most need. Each phase is based on the prioritisation of service delivery requirements, in the event of having fewer staff available to work should the situation worsen.

42. Services are currently operating in phase one, meaning that 'business as usual is being maintained, but doing it differently'. All statutory timescales for safeguarding visits and meetings remain the same (and are being met) but with enhanced use of technology to ensure officers see children and families through digital means such as WhatsApp, Teams and a number of other similar approaches as appropriate and required. The service is fully operational and continues to operate as near to normal as possible. A small number of face to face home visits are being undertaken where there is confidence that staff can safely socially distance themselves while fulfilling their duties. This is usually in relation to urgent child protection work.



43. At this point in time, the numbers of staff off work due to sickness or are self-isolating has remained stable at between 10-15% of the children's social care workforce and there is confidence that safeguarding services will remain as reported above. The approach is being closely communicated with partners, including through the MASH so they are aware that of this business as usual approach in the interests of protecting vulnerable children during the crisis. That vulnerability has not diminished and requires the local authority's constant vigilance and intervention.
44. Since the closure of schools was announced, practically all schools have reopened to provide emergency childcare to children of keyworkers and those that are vulnerable. Around 600 school age children have been attending regularly which is around 3.6% of the total school population. Schools remained open over the Easter period and the services maintained good coverage to provide childcare, including on Good Friday and Easter Monday. The take-up on the Isle of Wight of this school provision is higher than national averages. The Department for Education (DfE), including at ministerial level, have expressed concerns about the continuing need for effective support and surveillance of vulnerable children at this time.
45. The school improvement team has been particularly busy providing ongoing advice and guidance to headteachers to ensure schools could remain open safely and offer a high-quality experience to children. A system has been put in place to ensure that all schools report weekly on the support they are giving every individual child who has a social worker such as those on a child protection plan or those in care. Over 200 children open to social care are attending school regularly which is around 23% of the cohort. Where such children are not in school, then schools are keeping in regular contact with them to ensure pastoral needs are being met. This system is being monitored through weekly conversations between each headteacher and a member of the school improvement team. Colleagues from both social care and education are jointly working to increase the numbers of children attending school from this specific cohort.
46. There has been a rapid and significant decline in the number children requiring transport from home to school, however the provider market has responded well, and arrangements are in place for all children who need it. Financial support has been made available to the home to the school transport market through continued payment of part or all of contract costs.
47. Early years childcare providers have adapted to provide care for vulnerable and keyworker children, extending opening hours where necessary. Whilst government have confirmed that Early Years Education funding will continue to be paid to providers regardless of whether settings are open or closed, this source of funding represents less than an average of 50% of income for the majority of providers. Remaining income ordinarily comes from private parental fees and providers are under significant pressure, from parents whose children are not attending during the crisis, to reduce these fees. This is creating tension and significant financial pressure in the sector, further complicated by the broad range of providers delivering childcare which makes it complex for many to understand, and in some cases access, government financial support packages. The Council has reported these concerns directly to DfE.

### **Our Response: *Public Health***

48. Through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), the Director of Public Health (DPH) for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has provided public health leadership to the

multiagency response to ensure that the emergency is managed in a way that is proportionate and ensures that the local system, especially in health and social care, is able to cope with the pandemic. The DPH has also acted in the capacity of deputy chair of the LRF strategic command group, working to the chief fire officer of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as chair.

49. The public health team has ensured that the data on the disease is understood by all LRF partners to facilitate an effective response. Key workstreams led directly by the DPH within the LRF includes preventing the spread of infection through effective social distancing, setting up testing with national government and ensuring national guidance on PPE is communicated and interpreted for effective use by local agencies. Throughout all stages of the pandemic, support and advice has been given to all parts of the council dealing with different aspects of the public health emergency.

### **Our Response: *Adult Social Care***

50. On 26 March 2020 the council was required to move all homeless people out of shared dormitory type accommodation and bring 'rough sleepers in' within 48 hours. In so doing the usual rules on 'eligibility' were relaxed (specifically, the council did not need to establish whether the person was in priority need or whether their homelessness was intentional or not). This has resulted in the numbers of homeless people requiring emergency accommodation being increased by over 600%. In total, 81 people have presented to the council as homeless since the beginning of March 2020. The council's existing emergency accommodation is inadequate to satisfy the level of demand presented and it commissioned two large hotels (in Sandown and Newport) to provide additional emergency accommodation. The council has also commissioned accompanying support services to be based in each of these hotels, together with security personnel as a result of some troubling behaviours by some residents. During the Covid-19 emergency, the housing service has established a daily meeting of key partners who work to support homeless people including adult social care; the police; Inclusion (substance misuse services) and, most recently, mental health colleagues from the NHS Trust. All services, obviously, have had to adapt their service delivery model during the Covid-19 emergency and it is fair to say that those homeless people with dual diagnosis have been of particular concern regarding the level and complexity of risk they reveal. Sadly, there were two deaths of homeless people during May. Government has also introduced measures to enable the early release of certain categories of prisoners as part of its response to Covid-19 and recently announced a further extension of this scheme. To date, this has involved the council needing to provide emergency accommodation for 8 people leaving prison.
51. New discharge to assess requirements were published on 19 March 2020, setting an expectation of a maximum discharge time of 3 hours following a patient being declared medically fit for discharge. Additional funding was provided by government through the CCG to secure care home placements and domiciliary care packages for people leaving hospital and for people who would otherwise need to be admitted to hospital (for up to 12 weeks).
52. A single point of access (SPA) was established in the hospital which manages all hospital discharges. This is in line with the onwards care and independence workstream of our Health and Care Plan. The evidence reveals that the SPA and discharge to access processes have been highly successful in facilitating discharge throughout the period of emergency. The hospital has typically operated at less than 50 percent bed occupancy since the end of March 2020 (44.5% average in the 7 days

ending 19 May 2020). The reduced occupancy levels are also, of course, due to the temporary suspension of elective procedures. The lockdown measures significantly reduced the expected number of Covid-19 cases and there was a reduced level of activity in the emergency department. It is, however, important to add that the hospital has experienced ongoing pressures during the Covid-19 crisis because of available staffing levels. Equally, approximately half of the people who have been discharged from hospital did so under the SPA arrangements.

53. There has been considerable concern and attention devoted to the situation that has arisen in care homes and, to a lesser degree, the challenges being faced by domiciliary care providers, personal assistants and people providing care in other settings such as supported living. Between the beginning of March 2020 and 14 May 2020, 178 people living in the island's care homes have contracted Covid-19. In total, 35% of all care homes on the island have supported someone with the virus. Up until the 8 May 2020, 18 people have died in Island care homes as a result of Covid-19.
54. Adult Social Care has provided 7 day a week support for local providers (phone and email) since 13 March 2020. In addition, commissioners have undertaken weekly check-ins with providers, regardless of whether the provider has expressed any difficulty. The government has mandated that care providers submit an array of occupancy, staffing absence, access to PPE and incidence of residents with Covid-19 (and Covid-19 symptoms) data. As of 21 May 2020, the capacity tracker revealed that 5 residential care homes rated their overall status as "amber" (with none rating themselves as "red") and all others rating themselves as "green" and two nursing homes rating their overall status as being "red" (all others rating themselves as "green"). It is important not to portray a too optimistic a view however, as care providers have experienced very real difficulties in terms of the additional costs associated with Covid-19 (such as the hyper-inflation costs for PPE; staff absences and access to testing). There have been a number of instances where, working across adult social care and community health, it has been necessary to supply staff (nurses and care staff) to individual care homes because of their staffing absence levels and inability to secure agency staff.
55. Since publication of the Government's "Covid action plan for adult social care" published on the 15 April 2020, and most recently, its "Support for Care Homes" plan on the 14 May 2020, the system has worked as one to deliver very necessary support to care providers across infection prevention and control; testing; personal protective equipment and equipment supply; workforce support; and clinical support. This has been accompanied by government making a further £600m available to support care homes. The Island's allocation of this ring-fenced grant is £2.584m and 75% must be passported to care homes, regardless of whether the council is funding residents in those care homes. Councils have some discretion as to how they deploy the remaining 25%, but the clear intent is that pressures experienced elsewhere in the care provider market (domiciliary care providers; personal assistants etc) should be the priority. The council's chief executive, in liaison with health colleagues, Healthwatch and the Health and Wellbeing Board must submit a completed template and a letter setting out how the local system is actively supporting providers. This must be submitted by the 29 May 2020 and it will be scrutinised by the Better Care Support Team.
56. The council accepted a costing submission from the Isle of Wight Care Partnership and implemented temporary, enhanced, fees, of £1,020 per person per week for residential care, £1,375 per person per week for nursing care and £25 per hour for domiciliary care to all providers who agreed to sign up to new agreement. Those

providers who agreed to the new agreement specified the number of care home placements and domiciliary care hours they were able to offer for people leaving hospital and in order to avoid hospital admissions. All of these care home places, and domiciliary care hours were subsequently block booked and funded for 12 weeks, backdated to the 19 March 2020.

57. In addition, the council has fully implemented the 8 April 2020 advice notice from the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and delivered a 10% uplift in fees to providers for those people already funded by the council and CCG through our standard rates. This enhancement, again determined following consultation with the Isle of Wight Care Partnership, was paid to providers as a single lump sum covering 12 weeks on the 14 April 2020. The council is also paying all providers on plan, regardless or not whether care is delivered. Domiciliary care providers are also being funded for 14 days (or more if necessary) when any of their clients are admitted into hospital so that the provider does not experience financial pressures and they can continue to support the person at home after their discharge from hospital. Moving forward we are committed to continuing to support local providers and our reclaims process remains active. This sees payment of any additional, evidenced costs incurred being reimbursed to providers within six working days. We are also considering if a further lump sum enhanced payment should be made and will be continuing with the enhanced rates to support hospital discharge and hospital avoidance for a period of an additional 4 weeks initially.

#### **Our Response: *Neighbourhood Services***

58. As set out above, most Neighbourhood services such as leisure centres, libraries, museums and parking services have not operated over this period and staff have been effectively transferred into other functions to support the council's overall response.
59. Regulatory and community safety services have been the primary responder to the government's restriction regulations in respect to business closures and have been working closely with Hampshire Constabulary on restrictions on travel and gatherings. Trading standards, environmental health and licensing services have been providing business advice and guidance, seven days a week, as well as responding to concerns raised by the public or employees around social distancing and infection control. Community safety and trading standards have continued to provide support to our communities as unfortunately domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour and increased online and telephone scams have affected many people whilst in lockdown. Media updates signposting advice and where to seek further help has been repeated on a regular basis.
60. The housing renewal service has continued to deliver essential support to tenants, landlords and those requiring disabled facility grants to remain safe and well in their own homes. Officers have been working with the approved traders list to ensure that those requiring emergency works can still access suitable and vetted tradespersons. The service and officers continue to review the new government guidance and provide a comprehensive service through our updated webpages, email, telephone or visit if necessary.
61. The waste management team have been at the forefront of responding to the re-opening of recycling centres on the Island in line with government guidance. A collaborative project has seen the introduction of the on-line recycling centre booking system. This has enabled the site to be re-opened safely and in a controlled

environment. This system has provided the flexibility to easily manage visits and waste streams with appropriate social distancing measures in place. A full household collections service has been maintained for recycling, food and general waste services throughout the lockdown period with no disruption for residents whilst adjusting the way crews work and travel to work to maintain social distancing in cabs and within the Mechanical Treatment Plant. This is a significant achievement, as the council was one of very few in the United Kingdom not to step down or reduce its services.

62. The Highways PFI services have continued operating apart from some resurfacing works and teams have been responding flexibly during this period. The annual programme for resurfacing road repairs will be affected and some works are likely to be moved to a later date. Suitable communications plans will be utilised to advise affected communities of the revised programme.

### **Our Response: *Regeneration***

63. In addition to wholesale redeployment of the economic development team to development of processes and administration of the UK government's business support programmes outlined above, the regeneration directorate has continued to maintain statutory services around planning and building control, albeit via primarily digital means.
64. Property services staff have been liaising with council tenants regarding their concerns around rent payments where appropriate and keeping track of resulting risks to projected income. Other staff have also been redeployed to support the affected residents and community cell notably working in care homes and assisting with the set-up of community hubs.
65. Continuing work involves providing support and advice to voluntary organisations in terms of accessing national funding opportunities and working with town councils regarding preparation for easing of lockdown restrictions.
66. The Director of Regeneration has been tasked with developing the "Recovery Plan" for the council and the broader island community

### **Our Response: *Corporate Services***

67. The temporarily stand down of council committee meetings in order to respond appropriately to the government's action plan in response to Covid-19 and the subsequent passing of emergency legislation permitting remote attendance has meant that the democratic services team have been busy undertaking preparations to enable virtual council meetings to be introduced. These new regulations were very broad and did not stipulate how the changes in legislation should be implemented and as such has necessitated our own local solution to be implemented. In doing so there has been much preparation and testing to be undertaken.
68. Back office support teams have been providing the essential support to enable services to continue to operate as effectively as possible during the pandemic period. Perhaps the biggest demand, unsurprisingly, has been for technology support. An enormous effort has been seen by the council's ICT teams to enable and maintain additional remote working facilities at very short notice and making urgent adjustments to the council's ICT infrastructure to improve connectivity and access to business systems. iPads have been deployed to staff in children's services to enable them to

maintain contact with children and young people and to our care homes so that residents could contact their families and friends whilst by necessity were in isolation. The software development team have also worked at speed to enable the urgent deployment of an on-line appointment system for the registrar service and the development of a bespoke on-line booking system to enable the waste recycling centres to re-open. Additional video conferencing facilities have also been deployed to facilitate remote meetings as well as a live streaming facility for the crematorium to enable bereaved families unable to attend funerals in person to participate.

69. The business centre teams have been incredibly busy helping with the delivery of the government grants made available to businesses and economically vulnerable people on the Island and the payments that have resulted. There has been nearly a 4% increase seen in applications for assistance through the local council tax scheme with some £76,000 having been paid out in additional claims during the month of April alone. The council's payroll and creditor payments have all been successfully operated through remote working at home which has been the first time ever this has been completed.
70. The learning and development service has recently introduced a new learning management system which provides a range of on-line learning resources for staff which has enabled staff to continue receiving learning support and also for the delivery of induction and required training for staff who have been redeployed into front line care services. The adult and community learning team have also continued to support their learners remotely and have been keeping in contact with learning support through WhatsApp groups. Just over 50% of learners have continued with their studies through remote support mechanisms.

### **What is happening now**

71. Government's Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's Covid-19 recovery strategy has established a framework for the country to move to the next phase of response and the gradual relaxation of the measures put in place to restrict virus spread. As we exit lockdown, local plans are now being developed in response to the government's strategy and to assess the needs of the local population into its own recovery and longer-term plans for continuing to live with Covid-19 whilst the world's understanding of it becomes better known.
72. The director of regeneration has been identified as being the lead officer in the establishment of a new silver cell to develop recovery plans whilst taking account of the continued overlap with the response phase to ensure smooth transition as far as is reasonably possible. The LRF have already established a recovery co-ordination group and a draft recovery plan and an initial impact assessment, framework and objectives for an Island recovery plan have been developed. The identified community recovery plan objectives are set out at Appendix G for information.
73. There are plans now in place to manage the stand up of council meetings with effect from 1 June 2020 with the Annual Full Council meeting scheduled for September 2020.

### **Strategic Context**

74. Officers have continued to work to deliver the council's corporate objectives as set out in the corporate plan wherever possible. However, as may be appreciated, the focus has been on maintaining critical services to support the most vulnerable in our

community, delivering statutory services and assisting our business community to 'survive' the pandemic.

75. The speed by which the emergency response by the local authority and its partner organisations during this pandemic has been immense indeed to keep pace with the government guidelines and initiatives issued at short notice will without doubt impact on the delivery timescales for agreed corporate priority projects and plans. It will be necessary therefore to consider a refreshed corporate plan in due course and which also takes into account the on-going impact of living with Covid-19 for the foreseeable future.

### Financial/Budget Implications

76. The council has been mindful to balance its own fragile but (up to now) improving financial resilience with the emergency needs of the residents and businesses of the Island. The council has taken a responsible approach to meeting emergency spending for the direct costs associated with the emergency such as providing financial support to the adult social care provider market, procuring necessary PPE and providing accommodation for the homeless and rough sleepers whilst also seeking to ensure that any financial support for residents, suppliers and external organisations is provided on a case by case basis with demonstration of need. In this way the council has maintained an approach to target limited financial resources to those at risk and in most need.
77. Nevertheless, the financial position, as a consequence of this emergency, is serious. Following two tranches of emergency government funding totalling £9m, the council still has a forecast financial shortfall of £9.8m as described below:

Description	£m
Additional Costs	7.4
Budgeted Savings - Unable to be achieved	1.1
Income Losses (e.g. Rents, Fees and Charges)	8.0
Funding Losses (i.e. Council Tax and Business Rates)	2.3
<i>Less: Emergency COVID-19 Funding</i>	<i>(9.0)</i>
<b>Total Shortfall</b>	<b>9.8</b>

78. As described above, the major financial impact of the emergency has been driven by the additional costs (social care and homelessness) and the loss of income mainly from parking income (£3.2m), leisure centres (£1.7m), floating bridge (£0.4m), planning and building control (£0.4m) etc. Crucially, the forecast £9.8m follows the government's current stated planning assumptions with no second wave and the most recent three steps to recovery. A summary copy of the Delta2 financial return to government is attached as Appendix H for reference.
79. It remains unclear whether there will be further funding allocated from central government to help meet the £9.8m shortfall. The Secretary of State however has made it clear that councils should not expect government to meet any shortfall that council's experience, especially for spending that is not explicitly in alignment with the government's policy and guidance relating to the emergency. By way of example, the Secretary of State has written to council's stating the following:

*"This is both a local and a national challenge and it is vital that we work together to use available resources as wisely as possible. This might include redeploying staff or bringing in volunteers, or prudent use of financial reserves*

Robert Jenrick, 30 April 2020

*"We wouldn't want anybody to labour under a false impression that what they are doing will be guaranteed funded by central government"*

Robert Jenrick, 5 May 2020

*"But as you can imagine it is only fair that central government supports things that are open to all rather than individual choices by local councils."*

Robert Jenrick, 5 May 2020

80. Whilst a financial impact, forecast at £9.8m (and assuming no second wave) is clearly beyond the approved budget, given the level of uncertainty associated with this forecast which will depend substantially on both the depth of the forthcoming recession and the level of any further government funding, an emergency budget at this stage would be premature.
81. The council however has an obligation to plan its financial management responsibly. It is not allowed to either set a deficit budget or to draw upon its general reserves to the extent that they fall below the minimum level of £7m. Over the period of the council's medium-term financial strategy, the level of headroom above the minimum level of reserves that would be available is £3.2m.
82. Given the forecast deficit of £9.8m compared with available general reserves of just £3.2m, the Cabinet is in the process of developing a deficit recovery strategy which will enable the council to continue to operate without the need to consider emergency spending controls and service reductions under a S.114 Notice.
83. There is confidence that the emerging strategy, to be developed into a detailed plan, will be sufficient to identify savings of £9.8m. Given the uncertain nature of the £9.8m deficit, the strategy intends to place a number of previously approved spending plans "on hold" until such time as the overall financial position becomes clearer and therefore whether those plans can proceed or be deleted. The emerging strategy will involve the following:
  - Some use of the council's corporate contingency
  - Some use of earmarked reserves - previously set aside for risks that have subsided and to fund transformation activities
  - Placing some previously approved spending plans "on hold"
84. The council is in a position to consider placing 'on hold' some of these spending plans because of its prudent and robust approach to the management of its limited financial resources in recent years. Whilst these decisions will impact on its ability to deliver its overall corporate objectives and outcomes, as set out in the corporate plan, it is able to take a considered view as to how to restructure its priorities rather than having to stop all of its activities immediately. However, it will need to be mindful of the continuing and ongoing financial pressures that Covid-19 will bring to the council and the community.



## Legal Powers and Duties

85. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places obligations on category one responders (ie local authorities; emergency services and health) to ensure that there are local arrangements in place for civil protection during an emergency where there is a threat of serious damage to human welfare, the environment or security of the United Kingdom. The statutory duties to assess, plan and advise on the key risks for a local area are undertaken through the LRF structures. The risk of a pandemic forms one of those key risks.

86. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight LRF declared the emerging Covid-19 pandemic as a major incident (an emergency) and agreed to enact its emergency plans and command structures to manage the situation. During such time of an emergency, the chief executive and other officers have constitutional emergency decision making powers to make decisions on a day to day basis in order to respond to an emergency and maintain business as usual, so far as the council is able:

### 86.1 **Article 15 2.5(i):**

The chief executive or his nominee shall have all the powers of any other officer in the event of their absence or inability to act, except insofar as the exercise of such powers is by law limited to a specific post holder (the chief executive may not be the monitoring officer but may hold the post of chief financial officer if a qualified accountant).

### 86.2 **Officer scheme of delegation:**

8.4 (v) A chief officer is not required to exercise all delegations personally and may authorise officers of suitable experience and seniority to exercise delegated powers, either generally or specifically, on his/her behalf.

(x) If the post holder or office of any employee of the council is vacant, or the employee is absent or otherwise unable to act, the most suitable senior officer available is authorised to exercise the responsibilities of the vacant office.

### 8.5 Chief executive

- (i) Where necessary in consultation with the monitoring officer, chief finance officer, political groups, leader of the council and/or relevant Cabinet member(s) to authorise urgent action between Cabinet meetings and ensure that the chairman of the Scrutiny Committee is (where practicable) notified before the decision is made and then notified once the decision has been made. As and when required the Chief executive can appoint a deputy with full powers to act in his absence.
- (vii) To have all the powers of any other officer of the council in the event of their absence or inability to act, except in so far as the exercise of such powers is by law limited to a specific post holder.
- (viii) Chief officers and their direct reports are authorised within their areas of responsibility and subject to the following conditions:

- In an emergency, to take such action as is necessary within the law to protect life, health, and safety, the economic social or environmental well-being of the Island, and to preserve property belonging to the council or others.

### 86.3 Budget and policy framework rules

#### 4 Urgent decisions outside the budget or policy framework

4.1 The Cabinet may take a decision which is contrary to the council's policy framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with the budget approved by Full Council if the decision is a matter of urgency. However, the decision may only be taken:

- (i) if it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the Full Council; and
- (ii) if the chairman of Corporate Scrutiny Committee agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

### 86.4 The Council's decision-making process

#### 4. Member level decisions

4.1 All decisions by the Full Council, Cabinet, Individual Cabinet members and key decisions made by officers must have been listed in the forward plan. [...] In cases of genuine urgency see the urgency provisions below.

#### 5. Urgency

5.1 Sometimes decisions need to be made urgently and outside of the usual process (for example reducing the pre decision notification time or disapplying call in). Urgency in these cases is defined as cases where the council will be significantly disadvantaged by a delay and where these provisions are used clear explanations must be made in the written reports.

87. The Coronavirus Act 2020, which received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020 provided government with emergency powers to respond to the pandemic situation. This legislation amongst many other things, made provision for the postponement of any scheduled elections after 15 March 2020. Secondary legislation in the form of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 was passed to allow remote attendance for meetings of local authorities and determined there was no requirement to hold an Annual meeting of Full Council this year.

88. In developing plans to enable the re-instatement of council meetings and whilst the majority of issues could be addressed in written guidance, it was recognised that it would be necessary to temporarily adjust the council's Constitution Procedure Rules to facilitate remote meetings. The Monitoring Officer has considered the alterations that are required and under his constitutional powers in Article 18 Paragraph 2.2 (below), has proposed a number of new rules.

## 2. Changes to the Constitution

*2.2 Delegation. The monitoring officer has the delegated authority to amend the constitution to reflect decisions taken at Full Council, changes in the law, to correct errors or clarify ambiguities where to do so does not*

*alter (but gives further effect to) the executive arrangements or the principles enshrined in the constitution.*

A copy of the revised Procedure Rules is shown at Appendix I for information.

## **Risk Management**

89. A key component of the LRF, Gold and Silver command structures is to regularly identify, review and monitor associated risks. The council's strategic risk register had already focussed its attention to a potential pandemic situation as part of its normal council business management arrangements. However, attention to this and the mitigating actions required to minimise impact has become a key feature of monitoring within the emergency response arrangements. The latest review of our strategic risk for pandemic outbreak is shown as Appendix J for information.

## **Conclusion**

90. The extent of the response during the period of the pandemic has been herculean and is testament to the commendable efforts of all those involved. The Island has significantly benefitted from a strong and constructive collaborative working relationships across the public, private and voluntary sector. This report provides a mere overview of the total contribution made and the people involved in affording the best possible response to the emergency.

91. Sadly, the pandemic situation continues to have a major impact on the way the council delivers its services and how it supports our communities. It is anticipated that it will be necessary to plan for Covid-19 to remain with us for the foreseeable future and appropriate plans will need to be put in place to maintain adequate public safety measures both in the medium and longer term. All services have been affected and the council's corporate plan and agreed objectives will require refresh and adjustment to accommodate this life changing event. In the short term, it will be necessary to continue providing a response to the emergency whilst planning for recovery and seeking to return wherever possible to things that have greater familiarity to us.

92. The council's immediate focus of attention is to prioritise work that will secure the delivery of:

- A care home support plan
- Outbreak control plans (which will focus on planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools; management of other high risk places and locations of community interest; local testing arrangements to ensure a swift response that is accessible; assessing local contact tracing and infection control measures in complex settings; scenario planning for the future informed by local and national data and supporting vulnerable people to get help to self-isolate).
- Implementing social distancing arrangements in potentially busy pedestrian areas
- Supporting schools as they re-open
- Learning all of the lessons from our response to Covid-19 to advice the development of the "new way we will do things" in the future

## **APPENDICES**

[Appendix A](#): Covid-19 timeline

[Appendix B](#): Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum Command Structure, working strategy and operating objectives

[Appendix C](#): Isle of Wight Council Tactical Command group (Silver) structure and operating objectives

[Appendix D](#): Isle of Wight Tactical Co-ordination Group Membership

[Appendix E](#): Community Helpline Operating process, provisions and types of issues presented

[Appendix F](#): Sample communication campaigns undertaken

[Appendix G](#): Community recovery plan objectives

[Appendix H](#): Summary copy of the Delta2 financial return

[Appendix I](#): Revised Procedural Rules

[Appendix J](#): Strategic Risk Management - Pandemic Outbreak

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