

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 21 September 2020

Report Title

Update on the Council Response to the COVID -19 Emergency

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

To update on how the Council is currently responding to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Recommendations

1. Note the COVID-19 management and control arrangements that are in place.
2. Note the COVID-19 workstreams and the action being taken.
3. Provide feedback in relation to the workstreams and current actions.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Update on the Council Response to the COVID -19 Emergency

1.	Background																		
1.1	<p>Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The ongoing pandemic of coronavirus disease spread to the United Kingdom in late January 2020.</p> <p>This report provides an overview of how the Council is responding to the crisis, what this means for critical services and the critical issues being addressed.</p> <p>The Council is working at a national, regional and local level to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and to ensure that critical services are delivered and that the most vulnerable residents are supported.</p>																		
1.2	<p>The Council has responded in line with daily Government announcements and guidance. The most significant announcements are as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>16 March</td> <td>The Prime Minister advised people should work from home.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 March</td> <td>Government announced school closures to take effect from 20 March.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>23 March</td> <td>Government announces list of 'shielded' residents and writes advising them to stay at home and avoid all face to face contact for a period of 12 weeks.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>23 March</td> <td>Government announces UK 'lockdown' with exceptions only for shopping for essential items, one form of exercise a day, medical need or providing care to a vulnerable person or travel to work only if necessary.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9 April</td> <td>Government advise it is too early to lift lockdown measures.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16 April</td> <td>Government extend the lockdown for a further three weeks.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 May</td> <td>The Prime Minister announces some relaxations of restrictions as set out in the Government's 50-page road map 'Our plan to rebuild.'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>28 May</td> <td>The NHS contact tracing system goes live.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 June</td> <td>Further easing of lockdown measures, including more shops reopening and some children returning to school, as well as allowing up to six people to meet outdoors.</td> </tr> </table>	16 March	The Prime Minister advised people should work from home.	18 March	Government announced school closures to take effect from 20 March.	23 March	Government announces list of 'shielded' residents and writes advising them to stay at home and avoid all face to face contact for a period of 12 weeks.	23 March	Government announces UK 'lockdown' with exceptions only for shopping for essential items, one form of exercise a day, medical need or providing care to a vulnerable person or travel to work only if necessary.	9 April	Government advise it is too early to lift lockdown measures.	16 April	Government extend the lockdown for a further three weeks.	10 May	The Prime Minister announces some relaxations of restrictions as set out in the Government's 50-page road map 'Our plan to rebuild.'	28 May	The NHS contact tracing system goes live.	1 June	Further easing of lockdown measures, including more shops reopening and some children returning to school, as well as allowing up to six people to meet outdoors.
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	15 June	Wearing face coverings on public transport and in hospitals becomes mandatory.
	19 June	The four UK Chief Medical Officers announced that the COVID-19 alert had reduced from level 4 to level 3 across the UK.
	4 July	Pubs, restaurants, hairdressers, cinemas and theme parks allowed to reopen.
	6 July	Government relax guidance for people who are shielding.
	17 July	Government publishes 'The next chapter in our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy' which envisages 'a return to normality in spring 2021.'
	20 July	Guidance for working in care homes and domiciliary care is updated to include recommendation for the use of face masks and coverings in social care settings.
	24 July	Wearing face coverings in shops and supermarkets becomes mandatory.
	1 August	Government to pause shielding unless the transmission of COVID-19 in the community starts to rise significantly.
1.3	Governance, management and control arrangements	
	<p>When the COVID-19 crisis emerged in the UK at the beginning of March, the Council initiated its remote operation of command and control arrangements. These do not replace any established processes and procedures laid out within the Council's Constitution. However, in responding to a major incident, the Council's normal decision-making processes and structures are adjusted in order to respond effectively to any emergency. This is dictated by the Council's Major Incident Plan.</p>	
1.4	<p>The provisions of the Council's Constitution must be adhered to and decisions must be recorded publicly if they meet the threshold for Delegated Decision Notices to be published. For example, if a service is being stopped which is widely used, then it is a matter of public interest and a decision notice will need to be published.</p>	
1.5	<p>The command and control structure includes several workstreams, each with a lead officer. Each of the workstreams, the Tactical Group and the Gold Group are operating virtually, and all meetings are Microsoft Teams enabled. In addition, each directorate has an identified coordinator, who each play a key role in assessing business continuity needs and impact and work alongside the Emergency Planning team.</p>	

1.6	<p>SLT/Gold meetings chaired by the Chief Executive are now taking place twice weekly with a review of current information on the latest COVID position for the borough along with further intelligence about critical service delivery. This meeting sets the strategic objectives in line with national policy and regulations. A Tactical meeting also takes places three times a week and is now chaired by the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services. This group is responsible for developing actions to achieve the strategic objectives.</p> <p>Governance arrangements have been reviewed and streamlined to reflect current priorities as we move into recovery. This has included merging the Workforce, PPE and Accessible Areas workstreams into a single workstream (Corporate Incident, Continuity Management, PPE, Workforce and Recovery Cell.) Certain cells have also been stood down in reflection of the current situation, and will be reactivated where necessary (for example, including the Managing the Deceased and Housing cells.)</p> <p>The workstreams listed below are responsible for delivering the actions which are set out in workstream action plans and raising issues /decisions through the Tactical and Gold meetings.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="284 887 1385 1559"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="284 887 767 920">Workstream</th> <th data-bbox="767 887 1385 920">Designated Lead</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 920 767 1070">Corporate Incident, Continuity Management, PPE, Workforce and Recovery Cell</td> <td data-bbox="767 920 1385 1070">Tom Smith, Assistant Director, Community Safety & Street Scene and Lee Mann Assistant Director, Human Resources</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 1070 767 1182">Health and Social Care Systems</td> <td data-bbox="767 1070 1385 1182">Ian Spicer, Assistant Director, Independent Living and Ailsa Barr, Assistant Director Safeguarding</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 1182 767 1261">Humanitarian/ Voluntary and Community</td> <td data-bbox="767 1182 1385 1261">Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 1261 767 1406">Communications, Events and Culture</td> <td data-bbox="767 1261 1385 1406">Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism and Christopher Burton, Head of Communications</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 1406 767 1485">Economic Recovery</td> <td data-bbox="767 1406 1385 1485">Simon Moss, Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 1485 767 1559">Data Collation and Reporting</td> <td data-bbox="767 1485 1385 1559">Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Workstream	Designated Lead	Corporate Incident, Continuity Management, PPE, Workforce and Recovery Cell	Tom Smith, Assistant Director, Community Safety & Street Scene and Lee Mann Assistant Director, Human Resources	Health and Social Care Systems	Ian Spicer, Assistant Director, Independent Living and Ailsa Barr, Assistant Director Safeguarding	Humanitarian/ Voluntary and Community	Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence	Communications, Events and Culture	Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism and Christopher Burton, Head of Communications	Economic Recovery	Simon Moss, Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport	Data Collation and Reporting	Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence
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1.7	<p>The Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB) and the Health Protection Board (HPB) are also up and running. The Engagement Board is chaired by the Leader and has representation from the Rotherham Together Partnership. Its main objective is to support the effective communication of the test, trace and contain plan for the Rotherham borough and provide regular updates to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health Protection Board will also feed into existing Gold Command structures, by providing reports to the Place Gold meeting and to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Gold Command.</p>														
1.8	<p>Arrangements remain in place to assess and support the Council's business continuity plans. The business impact assessment (BIA) (which identifies the</p>														

	<p>Council's most critical services) is still the core document supporting the Business Continuity response. The purpose of the BIA is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensure that the Council can continue to deliver critical services during staff shortages, b) help the council to prioritise other resourcing decisions (for example: IT and phones) and c) respond to new or emerging critical services (for example the community hub) where additional resource needs to be deployed. <p>A team of Directorate co-ordinators continue to meet regularly to assess the BIA and to make recommendations to Gold Group about any resource or service delivery issues. The group met daily throughout April, with meetings reducing in frequency from May onwards. The group currently meets twice a week, once as part of the Council's Continuity, Workforce and Recovery Cell and once as a specific co-ordinators group.</p> <p>The co-ordinators also ensure that directorate situation update reports are submitted to Gold Group to provide a summary of each individual Directorate's position. These reports risk assess each critical service and provide an analysis of the key concerns and issues facing them. These were submitted daily at the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak but were stepped back gradually from May onwards and are now submitted weekly. Capacity is available to increase the frequency of reporting if this becomes necessary.</p>
1.9	<p>At the South Yorkshire level, the Council reports into the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) once per week. The LRF strategic co-ordinating group is attended by Anne Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, Teresa Roche, Director of Public Health and Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety and Regulatory Services. The LRF co-ordinates activity across South Yorkshire and formally escalates issues into national government.</p> <p>A number of cells have now been stood down based on the current situation, including the PPE cell and the managing the deceased cell. However, cells will be reactivated should the situation worsen.</p>
1.10	<p>Recovery</p> <p>Work is ongoing to develop the Council's recovery plan. Further detail on the recovery plan is subject to a separate report. In summary, the key aims of the recovery plan are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restart Council services in a timely way, adapting them to meet current needs in light of the pandemic • Continue to manage the ongoing effects of the pandemic including the outbreak control plan • Work with our partners to support residents and businesses through the pandemic.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Economic Recovery</p> <p>A key priority is understanding the impact of the COVID crisis on the Rotherham economy and to support the development of an Economic Recovery Plan to help mitigate the impact on businesses and residents. The Economic Recovery Cell (formerly economic recovery workstream) has provided the following update, linked to the initial priorities identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An in-depth survey was completed by over 200 businesses in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and other partners, findings of which have been shared to highlight information and intelligence on business and economic impact and identify threats and risks; a SWOT analysis has also been completed. • Available business support and reliefs have been identified and communicated to Rotherham businesses on how to access support available, including Council-run grant and wider support schemes through the City Region and Central Government. • The Council have delivered 3,928 business support grants with a total value £44.4m as part of the Small Business Rates Grant and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant schemes. • Through the Discretionary Business Support Grant scheme the Council has delivered a further 276 grants at a total value of £2.479m. • In addition to the grants made available to Rotherham businesses, £33.7m of business rates relief has been awarded to over 1,150 businesses leaving them with no business rates bill to pay in 2020/21. • A review/gap analysis of business support and reliefs was carried out and fed into the SCR Renewal Action Plan, with additional capacity and support requested from Central Government in the form of £1.72 bn of funding for the SCR. • Impacts of infrastructure and transport issues have been factored into the economic and business recovery and resilience process, in conjunction with partners across the SCR.
2.2	<p>Rotherham Community Hub</p> <p>As part of the Council's response to the COVID crisis the Rotherham Community Hub (RCH) was established. The RCH call for volunteers was launched on 25 March; the offer of support to people needing help was launched on 30 March along with the Council Riverside House foodbank. The Rotherham Heroes volunteer programme is operating across the borough to ensure support is in place for our most vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 outbreak. The Rotherham Community Hub includes Rotherham Council, Voluntary Action Rotherham and other community partners.</p>

2.3	There have been a total of 3,834 requests for support received so far by the Community Hub since its launch. To ensure the right support is put in place, each resident is carefully screened to ensure their individual needs can be met. As of 5pm on the 30 July, 3,536 of requests had been resolved and 298 were in progress. Support packages can be made up of one or more items. So far 1,469 have received food support, 1,488 have been helped with prescription collections, 326 are being supported with loneliness, 86 with pet care, 418 have been signposted to other services and a further 1,042 with other issues.
2.4	The response to the call for community volunteers in Rotherham was immediate. In the first week alone, 700 residents had come forward to offer help and since then that figure has grown. Volunteers that have been vetted continue to be matched with residents who need support. As of 27 th July, 305 volunteers were cleared and available to support RMBC workers with cases.
2.5	In addition to individuals responding to the Rotherham Heroes scheme, 435 business have also pledged their support.
2.6	It has been agreed that the Rotherham Community Hub will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. Residents will still be able to call the helpline number or go on the website to access the support they need.
2.7	The Food Crisis Support service will also continue to be in place, with options being explored to extend provision to non-food items and essential household goods. Referrals for this service can be made not only from the Community Hub but by any service or ward member who identifies a person or family struggling to purchase food for whatever reason (i.e. isolation, financial restraints). To date, 1,182 households have been referred to the project resulting in 2,397 food parcel deliveries which have fed 2,427 people, 855 of these being children.
2.8	Contact was made with residents who were shielding to ensure that support from services or partners was in place where appropriate. Following the Government decision to pause the Shield programme, no further calls are being made to shielding residents. However, the Council is ready to stand this service back up if needed.
2.9	Neighbourhood working Neighbourhood working is crucial in this time of national crisis. The vital community leadership role provided by ward members is central to the Council's response. Ward members are being supported by the Neighbourhoods Team and continue to work with local groups and residents to ensure that help is reaching the people that need it.
2.10	In line with LGA guidelines for councillors, many Rotherham ward members continue to provide direct practical support to isolating and vulnerable residents through telephone befriending, organising food deliveries and supporting community groups. As part of the Council's support for emergency

	food deliveries, ward members can assess and refer cases directly to the food crisis centre or via the community hub.
2.11	The Neighbourhoods Team continue to support ward members via virtual ward meetings. These include Community Action Partnerships and other multi-agency meetings. Over the last few months, Members have refreshed their ward priorities to reflect the impact of the ongoing pandemic and used their ward budgets to support activity on the ground. The new ward plans will be published online in September 2020 as part of the refresh of the Neighbourhoods ward pages.
2.12	Regular liaison with the Parish Councils is taking place. Conference calls are attended by various council officers in order to provide the Parish Councils with updates on the council's response to the pandemic, recovery plans and the re-introduction of services.
2.13	<p>Impact on adult care</p> <p>National Government guidance has been issued in relation to adult social care. This has been implemented by the Council and covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • controlling the spread of infection in care settings • supporting the workforce • supporting independence, supporting people at the end of their lives, and responding to individual needs • supporting local authorities and the providers of care
2.14	It is recognised that as Local Authorities and care providers are facing rapidly growing pressures as more people need support because unpaid carers are unwell or unable to reach them, and as care workers are having to self-isolate or unable to work for other reasons.
2.15	The Council is responding to a range of measures by the Government to help the care system manage these pressures. The requirement is that the Council should do everything it can to continue to meet existing duties prior to the Coronavirus Act provisions coming into force. In the event that the Council is unable to do so, it is essential to streamline existing assessment arrangements and prioritise care so that the most urgent and acute needs are met. The powers in the Act enable the Council to prioritise more effectively where necessary than would be possible under the Care Act 2014 prior to its amendment (referred to in this guidance as the Care Act). In any such situations, councils must apply to national government for social care easements. These measures are time-limited and are there to be used as narrowly as possible.
2.16	The Council is working closely and proactively with its partners across the health system to respond to the new national guidance, increasing care home capacity to enable a timelier discharge from hospital and to help manage hospital resources.

2.17	All Care Homes in Rotherham have a named GP who provides regular support to the establishments. This is funded by the CCG through a Local Enhanced Service (LES) agreement. In addition, the Rotherham Foundation Trust provides community support through the Care Homes team providing expert advice on nursing, medication and infection control, working closely with the Care Home managers and staff to implement best practice.
2.18	Following the Government guidance on social distancing and in response to the needs of registered providers, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) determined on 16 March 2020 that they would no longer carry out routine inspections of registered providers including Care Homes. They will however continue to inspect where there are any safeguarding issues or pressing requirements to intervene. The CQC has now established an Emergency support framework (ESF). The ESF provides a structured framework for the regular conversations that inspectors are having with providers and provides CQC with an additional source of intelligence to help monitor risk and identify where providers may need extra support.
2.19	Work is progressing with the Skills Academy which aims to train people who are new into the care sector. A major part of the academy is matching people with vacancies and work is underway to launch the webpage.
2.20	The Council continues to manage the flow of work, seeing adults who need to be seen and meeting its statutory duties albeit with some things that usually happen face-to-face being undertaken by video calls or phone. Any safeguarding or high-risk cases that require a social work intervention are still being conducted through face-to-face visits, whilst maintaining social distancing.
2.21	All potential visits are risk assessed and appropriate PPE issued as required.
2.22	Some services were stepped down at the start of the pandemic – (i.e. Day services and Respite.) Every other service has operated continually throughout the pandemic maintaining critical support. Following the recent guidance on Day Care by the Social Care Institute for Excellence, services are now planning a phased approach to reopening.
2.23	Where staff were unable to work, they have been redeployed to support the Rotherham Community Hub. There has also be some excellent collaboration between the Single Point of Access Team and the Hub.
2.24	Impact on Children’s services The Council continues to manage the flow of work, seeing children who need to be seen and substantially meeting its statutory duties albeit with some things that usually happen face-to-face being undertaken by video calls or phone. The majority of social work and early help visits to children and their families are still being conducted through face-to-face by visits to the home whilst maintaining social distancing. During July 4,092 children were visited

	by social workers, 3,855 (94.2%) were physical visits and 237 (5.8%) were virtual visits.
2.25	There were amendments to some legislation which were enacted on 24 April. These amendments included some relaxations to regulations regarding services for Looked after Children. One of the relaxations allowed the use of virtual as opposed to physical visits to children and this is the only element of the amendments which Rotherham children's social care has used. As outlined above, the majority of visits have continued to be physical visits. Amendments to the regulations are scheduled for 24 September 2020. Rotherham children's social care anticipates ceasing virtual visits as a replacement for physical visits before that date and does not anticipate using any of the other amendments between now and 24 September 2020.
2.26	Throughout this period contact has been maintained with our most vulnerable children, young people and families. The number of new 'Contacts' recorded through the MASH remained consistent with the previous year in June, showing eight less than the same period in 2019. However during July there has been a significant rise compared to July 2019, meaning that 168 more 'contacts' were received translating into 99 additional (as compared to July 2019) referrals to children's social care.
2.27	From the 17 March the Early Help Offer was swiftly reconfigured to reflect national guidance. Youth Centres, Children Centres, and Crowden Outdoor Activity Centre were closed. Family Group Conferencing, Face to Face Parenting work, targeted group work and detached youth work were suspended. Work is currently underway with exploratory meetings with staff and partners looking at how to safely bring back some of these services in line with latest government guidance.
2.28	Where staff were unable to work, they have been redeployed to support the Rotherham Community Hub. There has also been some excellent collaboration with the Early Help Triage Team and the Hub with regards to those residents on the Shielded list.
2.29	The pre-visit risk assessment tool continues to be used by Early Help, Youth Offending Team and social workers. Social workers and Early Help Family Support Workers have continued to visit all children and families RAG rated as red or amber.
2.30	Inclusion support is being delivered based on an individualised risk assessment for children with special educational needs and disabilities and Liberty House has remained open to offer short breaks to children with disabilities where a lack of respite care might lead to family break down. Other statutory duties are being delivered virtually. The Inclusion offer returned to Business as Usual when schools returned in September. Liberty House will continue to offer Short Breaks to a reduced number of children in accordance with social distancing guidelines. The Disability Family Support Team will continue to offer a Virtual Service utilising the pre-visit Risk assessment tool for all necessary home visits.

2.31	Support is in place to schools in preparation for opening in September 2020, and risk assessment guidance has also been updated and distributed. A daily communications system will be operating during term time to keep schools informed with current guidance and updates from PHE, central government, DfE, Ofsted, Ofqual and Regional Schools Commissioner.
2.32	Rotherham has received and distributed all 990 laptops/devices under the DfE technology for vulnerable children scheme in phase one of the programme. All children identified within the survey have received their device.
2.33	All Schools/Academies are signed up to the Government Free School Meals voucher scheme which is scheduled to end at the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year (September 2020) when all pupils are expected to be in school under DfE requirements.
2.34	<p>Culture, Leisure and Events</p> <p>The response from the public and partners to the work of the Culture Sport and Tourism team throughout lockdown has been particularly encouraging, given last year's launch of the Cultural Strategy and the mission to 'get more people active, creative and outdoors, more often'. Since March, officers have been working to maintain the delivery of critical services, such as parks and green spaces, emergency tree works and advice on events and mass gatherings and deliver enhanced online services, with a range of imaginative projects, events and activities designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce social isolation, reach new customers/audiences and encourage community cohesion and connection • enable residents to enjoy, appreciate and feel proud of the borough in which they live, celebrating its heritage and landscape and encouraging positive morale and mental wellbeing. • reduce pressure on other critical services with targeted interventions for those who are vulnerable or shielding. <p>More recently, the team has been working to reopen services safely and work with partners to develop a new 'Creative Recovery' programme of activities which can provide an effective and timely response to the 'new normal' as it develops.</p>
2.35	In support of the 'daily exercise', all parks and green spaces remained open to provide the means for all residents to exercise safely in the outdoors. Although attractions such as watersports and play areas have been closed, these are in the process of reopening subject to Government legislation, local infection rates and measures to manage Covid-related risks. Online engagement included nature trails, outdoor learning activities for children and families and film footage celebrating local wildlife and green spaces.

2.36	Whilst library buildings closed, online activities encouraged over 400 residents to join the library for the first time and online story times, reader groups, science clubs and other content reached c.90,000+ interactions between April and July. The new capital improvement programme has begun to improve the quality of the customer experience in each of our libraries and the 'Order and Collect' service and 'Pop-Up Outdoor Libraries' have enabled safe borrowing from August.
2.37	The Civic Theatre, Music Education Service and Museum have all continued to offer online engagement activities, with targeted work with children and young people continuing throughout through online music lessons, comedy nights and imaginative campaigns to introduce hitherto-unseen parts of Rotherham's historic collections via social media platforms. As well as receiving positive feedback from residents, this work has reached national audiences and with positive feedback from industry peers. All services are in the process of reshaping to sustain this online engagement and utilise the closure period to introduce service improvements.
2.38	Sports and leisure facilities closed in March and reopening has begun in phases, with careful consideration of public safety and local infection rates. Online fitness activities have been shared via social media to enable people to remain physically active during lockdown. The 'virtual' Rotherham 10k was particularly successful in engaging wide participation from residents of all ages as well as attracting involvement from people beyond Rotherham as far afield as Scotland and the United States. The event successfully raised more than £10,000 for Age UK Rotherham.
2.39	The Council has received praise from the public, partners and peers for its leadership on events and mass gatherings. Despite the disappointment about the loss of the events programme (particularly highlights such as Rotherham Show and Yorkshire Day) there has been widespread support for the need to cancel and the proposal to return with a revised programme only when it is safe. The Council has also been using enhanced online activity to engage with communities, which has been received well. The Council has worked closely with emergency services and others on the Rotherham Events Safety Advisory Group to provide advice to organisers of the 75+ events which take place annually. Current focus is on managing expectations and plans for Bonfire Night, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas, along with a new programme of training, starting with Traffic Management and Stewarding.
2.40	The cultural and leisure sector has been significantly impacted by Covid because of its reliance on mass public engagement and revenue from ticket sales and hospitality. That said, indications are that the public appetite for engagement is higher than ever and that these activities have an important role to play in wellbeing, enabling people to make sense of this extraordinary experience and rebuilding civic pride, morale and confidence. The 'Creative Recovery' programme is intended to deliver bespoke interventions which add value to wider work underway through Adult Social Care, the NHS, Public Health and the ongoing work of the Community Hub. Recovery for the sector

	more widely will continue to require close-working with partners, particularly in finance, RIDO and Public Health, to balance the need for mass engagement with infection control measures and new financial models to ensure sustainability and resilience.
2.41	Communication and engagement A communication strategy was put in place at the start of the COVID-19 crisis. Its aim is to provide a reliable source of information to all audiences, including residents, businesses, elected members, staff and all partners. This has been achieved by delivering coordinated, frequent and clear public messaging in electronic briefings, COVID-19 specific web pages, printed leaflets for members and a leaflet which was sent to all households.
2.42	The first electronic briefing to elected members and stakeholders was issued on 5 March 2020. This was initially issued daily and has since been reduced to three times per week. The member briefing contains the latest developments and changes to services, government guidelines, the Community Hub and how members can be involved.
2.43	The first electronic briefing to residents was issued on 20 March 2020 and sent to approximately 60,000 recipients who had already subscribed to Council news and information newsletters. This briefing was sent daily in the first week and then reduced to twice weekly to avoid over-saturation. It includes information about Council services, links to government, NHS and PHE guidelines and signposts to the Rotherham Community Hub and Rotherham Heroes pages on the website. There has been strong engagement with the public briefing with opening rates often exceeding 50% (industry average is 24%) and very few unsubscribes.
2.44	A COVID-19 website presence has been created which provides general information pointing to the PHE website and multi-language versions of the World Health Organisation's advice. It also points anyone with concerns to contact NHS 111 and general handwashing advice. Webpages are constantly updated with the latest information including changes to Council services as we begin to re-open and resume activities that paused during the lockdown period.
2.45	Social media activity has seen positive engagement from audiences. Enhanced use of video messaging has also been a feature of the approach to COVID communications, with some excellent reach and engagement being achieved.
2.46	Two printed leaflets have been produced. The first one was information about the Community Hub and how people could ask for help. Each elected member has received 100 copies to give to people who may have been isolating without access to electronic information from the Council. The second leaflet was distributed to every household and included public health advice about testing and reducing community transmission.

2.47	The Council remains in contact with community and voluntary groups and faith organisations online and there are weekly VCS liaison meetings with key infrastructure organisations including VAR, REMA and FareShare.
2.48	The most recent communications plan has been around outbreak control/track and trace, which has reiterated the message to Help Keep Rotherham Open' and reminding Rotherham residents that additional freedoms come with additional responsibility. This includes promoting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying two metres apart wherever possible • Regular and thorough handwashing • Self-isolating and getting tested when symptomatic • Wearing a face covering where appropriate.
2.49	These key messages are included in a toolkit of resources that has been translated into six languages and is available for free by placing a request with the comms team. Uptake from stakeholders including community groups and health colleagues has been strong. Work is ongoing at grassroots level to connect with hard-to-reach audiences.
2.50	As part of the Intelligence-led Testing Strategy, a social media campaign was used to engage residents and people who work in the Borough to get tested for COVID-19, whether they had symptoms or not. This campaign resulted in more than 10,000 people being tested in 10 days.
2.51	Innovative work has been carried out to connect with younger audiences in the form of a video campaign displayed on the side of an LED display truck that toured the borough for three days in July. A copy of the video, featuring RUFV manager Paul Warne reiterating the key messages, was requested to be sent to the Cabinet Office as an example of best practise.
2.52	Availability and accessibility of PPE The supply and appropriate use of PPE is critical to the welfare of vulnerable people; critical services and social care staff working across Rotherham, both for the council and the independent sector. A robust framework has now been established across Rotherham and through the South Yorkshire LRF (SYLRF) to coordinate stock control, supply and distribution.
2.53	The Council has continued to stock at least six weeks' worth of all PPE items locally and significant greater stock resilience via the SYLRF Procurement Hub. The Council is involved in a range of procurement initiatives which have created a more sustainable supply chain including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting providers to maximise their existing procurement routes • Sharing supplies across Place (Mutual Aid) • Participation in SYLRF Procurement Hub which will continue to procure substantial PPE stock to support all SY authorities until at least March 2021

2.54	The SYLRF procurement strategy has increased confidence in securing long-term supplies of key PPE through increased buying power and removal of potential local competition.
2.55	The PPE workstream meets weekly to consider current stock position, updates to national guidance, orders required and any quality concerns. The chair reports into the Continuity, Workforce and Recovery workstream, as well as the SYLRF PPE cell. Services including public health, health and safety, procurement and finance attend to allow for informed decision making.
2.56	The Council provides between 2-4 weeks of supplies to internal services, based on an assessed need through the Health and Safety Team. A range of external partners such as independent care providers and funeral directors can approach the Council as a 'supplier of last resort' and will be allocated a maximum of seven days' worth of stock. This type of supply has substantially decreased since May as the global supply chain recovers.
2.57	The supply, allocation and distribution of PPE has stabilised considerably over the last few months. Two members of staff are still partially redeployed into COVID-19 Stores, which opens two days per week to allow services to collect stock. This is likely to continue until demand levels decrease substantially.
2.58	There are still risks associated with supply which need to be managed and although the SYLRF procurement strategy strengthens the Council's position, any increase in infection rate is likely to cause further global supply issues. This risk is mitigated through the Council and SYLRF holding six months' of stock, ensuring that any potential supply issues can be rectified whilst using these reserves.
2.59	Issues related to the quality of stock have decreased as global supply improves and trusted suppliers are able to meet the Council's demand. Robust processes have been put in place to track stock distribution and allow for recall of any stock that is flagged as being of concern. Services have links to regional and national partners who inform of any urgent quality issues.
2.60	As more Council services return, the assessed demand for PPE continues to increase. Originally, the provision of PPE was mainly focused on the Adult Social Care workforce, but this has now expanded to cover most front-line services. As the Council continues to recover and bring services back online, it is likely that demand will continue to increase for a variety of PPE items, as well as related products such as face coverings and hand sanitiser.

2.61	<p>Managing the Deceased</p> <p>Forecasting on death rates has been undertaken and deaths are tracked daily. Between 16 March and 17 July 2020, there have been 321 Covid-related deaths registered: as at 17 July, death rates are currently averaging at normal for the time of year, 43 per week, including non-Covid deaths.</p> <p>Capacity modelling has been undertaken across certification, registration, body storage, burials and cremations to understand pressure points. Mitigating actions to reduce pressure on services and ensure that the deceased and their next of kin are treated with dignity and respect at all times are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death registration capacity has been increased through the training of additional registrars. These are currently stood down but remain available should demand increase. • Timeslots for funeral services have now returned to 45 minute slots which offer families increased service times and higher attendance. Infrastructure is in place should demand rise to reduce service times in light of a second spike in death rates. • Live webcasting, social distancing, increased cleaning schedules and a reduction in the numbers allowed to attend to a maximum of 30 are now in place to ensure that funerals can go ahead and still maintain the measures needed to reduce the risk of transfer of infection. • Equalities issues continue to be monitored and addressed and a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment is in place. Regular calls with faith communities have been undertaken. Additional arrangements have been put in place to support the continuation of Muslim faith burials, including close working with the hospital to provide training on safe washing of bodies and use of PPE. • The 'Listening Ear' support service, established in collaboration with neighbouring authorities and the NHS, has provided additional support for those grieving and for people working within the 'Managing the Deceased' pathway, such as independent funeral directors, who might not otherwise have access to workplace counselling services. The pilot has been evaluated with an extension to 31st December 2020, alongside wider, non-clinical, interventions to provide support to grieving families.
2.62	<p>New guidance to the public has been made available via the Council's website. Work is ongoing to promote the new arrangements in place, the continued importance of booking funeral services promptly and the need for continued social distancing.</p>
2.63	<p>The workstream is treating the recovery process as one of stabilisation: as we go into winter, death rates are forecast to be higher than normal and the new working arrangements and capacity need to be easily stepped up if required to create resilience for seasonal increases, a possible second surge or a concurrent incident which might impact on deaths.</p>

2.64	<p>Impact on waste services</p> <p>The Domestic collection of general waste (pink lidded bin), paper and card (green bin) and plastic, glass and cans (black bin) are now operating normally with no disruption to the service. The level of general waste being collected has increased significantly year on year and remains higher than usual. Levels of recycling through kerbside collections are also significantly increased compared to the same period last year. The service is therefore working hard to maintain the service within the existing level of frontline resources.</p>
2.65	<p>Garden waste services have been running since the 11 May following a suspension of this service at the beginning of the crisis. This service now has 39,500 subscribers in place, comparable with the same point last year.</p>
2.66	<p>Processes are still in place at Hellaby depot to ensure that social distancing is maintained at the start and end of the day and staff are being deployed appropriately to ensure safety. This involves a number of additional staff transporting collection teams to site to undertake their day's work.</p>
2.67	<p>Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) have reopened with social distancing measures in place. This includes traffic management around the sites as well as staff on the sites. The Council continues to work with partners, including the Police to ensure sites are managed in a safe way.</p>
2.68	<p>Impact on domestic abuse services</p> <p>The Council continues to work with partners through the Safer Rotherham Partnership to support victims of domestic abuse. Services are monitoring demand, which continues to fluctuate with some small increases in areas such as referrals to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).</p>
2.69	<p>Nationally a range of funding opportunities have been announced including £10m for charities in relation to safe accommodation, £2m to support national charities and £25m through the Ministry of Justice which is being allocated to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to distribute locally. Rotherham has been successful in applying for additional funding to support the commissioned provider, Rotherham Rise to increase the webchat hours and availability and further funding for two additional support workers to manage any increases in demand. A number of other service providers have also been successful in seeking funding to support COVID arrangements. The Rotherham Domestic Abuse Refuge, along with Action Housing also received further funding to increase refuge and safe housing.</p>
2.70	<p>Impact on Housing Services</p> <p>The COVID crisis has had an impact on Housing services and the Council is responding by:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that residents are supported and have access to advice regarding rent payment, debt and universal credit. There has been an increase in demand for tenancy support as well as advice and assistance with financial challenges and access to benefits. However, the service is responding extremely well to the levels of demand placed upon it currently. • The original portfolio of temporary accommodation was 64 units, which was increased to 89 units. A decision was then taken to increase the portfolio of temporary accommodation by a further 25 units by 1 November 2020. 25 have been identified to date, 2 are already in use and 23 are currently being prepared for use. • Undertaking 'safe and well checks' by telephone to vulnerable tenants. 5000 calls have been made to date, with customers in need of assistance being referred to services as appropriate, including social care and the Rotherham Community Hub. • Providing emergency and critical repairs to Council homes. Priority areas of focus have included work on empty homes to support homelessness provision, work that has facilitated safe hospital discharges and work to keep Council estates safe from immediate risks and hazards. This activity has now been extended, with the recovery of some responsive internal repairs, including the completion of works suspended at the time of the lockdown. • Management of urgent ASB casework and work to contribute to the maintenance of a safe neighbourhood environment continues, with a strong focus on responding to and protecting the most vulnerable, through continued joint locality team working arrangements. • Ensuring private rented sector housing standards are maintained through the continued sustainment of the selective licensing scheme. • Working with delivery partners, including developers and Homes England to assess the current housing programmes and the wider market position and to shape recovery planning. Activity on many development sites around the Borough has now recommenced within Government guidelines.
2.71	<p>Local Outbreak Control Plan</p> <p>The Outbreak Control Plan has been peer reviewed, agreed by the Local Outbreak Engagement Board and published online https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/coronavirus. The plan covers interventions across the main themes as directed nationally. There is an agreed communications plan for Rotherham.</p>
2.72	<p>The Council is responding to the data and actively taking steps to prevent further spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) across Rotherham and South Yorkshire. The data currently shows the South Yorkshire has a higher than the national average rate and the rate is not decreasing as quickly as Public Health England (PHE) would like. Therefore, PHE and national leaders (Chief Medical Officer) have given permission to use a local intelligence-led enhanced testing strategy across South Yorkshire aimed at accelerating the decline in new cases.</p>

2.73	Testing sites are now running 7 days a week in Rotherham, with a drive-through testing site at Midland Road old bus depot and walk-up site at Forge Island. These sites will make it easier for the public to access a test.
2.74	Following successful communication of an open offer of testing including asymptomatic testing, residents are now being encouraged to get tested if they have only mild symptoms or any concern. Enhanced testing is in place for those symptomatic and with causes of concern.
2.75	There are plans in place to promptly respond to the changing picture in Rotherham including outbreaks and clusters. Testing data on Rotherham cases is monitored daily to ensure surveillance of community transmission and a timely response to any outbreaks or suspected clusters. This data is considered in conjunction with other relevant indicators such as daily hospital admissions and deaths. The testing data shows sporadic cases across the Borough, rather than 'hotspots', however the identification of a few households with cases within a particular area enabled a fast neighbourhood response to promote uptake of testing and reinforce self-isolation advice. Systems are in place to enable local reporting of outbreaks, such as at care homes, schools or workplaces, and Incident Management Teams are rapidly deployed to advise on appropriate measures to reduce further transmission.
2.76	<p>Supporting the workforce</p> <p>The safety and wellbeing of our workforce remains a key priority and all guidance issued to staff and managers is aligned to the latest government guidance. As well as usual provision through occupational health and our employee assistance programme, a series of manager and staff briefings have been issued that provide information on what support is available during the current crisis and how managers can best stay in touch and support team members.</p>
2.77	To augment our mental health and wellbeing offer, a comprehensive support offer for staff (Your Wellbeing Guide), plus a manager toolkit (Rotherham Leader Wellbeing Guide), were launched in July. The PDR process has also been reviewed to place more emphasis on staff support, health and wellbeing during 2020/21. HR are also currently collating feedback from staff on their experiences of working from home with feedback informing our future support offer for colleagues across the Council.
2.78	As of 13 July 2020, there was a sickness absence rate of 4% across the Council. Sickness rates have traditionally ranged between 3.5% - 4% for the Council's workforce. Of the open sickness absence cases, 5% are directly related to coronavirus symptoms. The current absence rate (including all absence types) across the Council is 7% and has reduced from 12% since the beginning of the crisis. Total sickness absence and coronavirus related absence have seen reductions since April.

2.79	Regular collation of workforce management information across regional Local Authorities showed average coronavirus absence levels to be between 5% and 10%. Based on current data, the Council's current absence rate (measuring those currently absent due to coronavirus symptoms, those who are isolating and off work due to caring or vulnerability issues) currently equates to 3% of the workforce; below the average levels seen across the region and down from 6% in May.
3.	Options considered and recommended proposal
3.1	That Cabinet:- a) Note the COVID-19 management and control arrangements that are in place. b) Note the COVID-19 workstreams and the action being taken. c) Provide feedback in relation to the workstreams and current actions.
4.	Consultation on proposal
4.1	This report is for information and therefore, no decision is required and no consultation needed.
5.	Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision
5.1	Not applicable. This report is for information and no decision is required.
6.	Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)
6.1	This report is providing an overview of the management and controls arrangements put in place following the outbreak of COVID-19, along with an update on the actions and workstreams being progressed. Therefore, there are no direct financial implications of this report.
6.2	The financial information contained within the report is an accurate representation of the financial position of COVID-19 impacts and workstreams at the point in time of production of the report.
6.3	There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report other than those already detailed relating to the procurement of PPE.
7.	Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)
7.1	There have been several legislative changes since the start of the pandemic, including the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and numerous associated regulations. Further several pieces of Government guidance have been issued which affect the way in which the Council operates. The ways in which

	the Council has responded to these legislative changes and Guidance is set out within the body of the report.
8.	Human Resources Advice and Implications
8.1	Human Resources implications are set out in sections 2.76 to 2.79.
9.	Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults
9.1	All children and families and vulnerable people are affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Support provided by Children's services is set out in paragraphs 2.24-2.33. Support from Adult Social Care is set out in 2.13-2.23. Further support is also provided by the Rotherham Community Hub, including support for vulnerable people and further detail is set out in 2.2-2.8.
10.	Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications
10.1	COVID-19 impacts on all of the population within the Borough, with those who are older, with pre-existing health conditions and BAME communities particularly at risk. The report sets out the Council's approach to delivering critical services for the vulnerable including those with protected characteristics. The report specifically covers some aspects of disability, age and faith/religious belief.
11.	Implications for Ward Priorities
11.1	The COVID-19 emergency affects all residents across the Borough. Ward members are working with residents to ensure that people receive the help they need as set out in paragraph 2.9-2.11.
12.	Implications for Partners
12.1	The Council is working closely with partners across the public, private and VCS sector. The Health Protection Board, overseen by the Local Outbreak Engagement Board co-ordinates outbreak control activity across the Borough.
13.	Risks and Mitigation
13.1.	There are significant and serious risks associated with the COVID-19 crisis. Each workstream has undertaken a risk assessment including mitigating actions to be taken. The risks are captured in the threat and risk assessment and are reviewed regularly by workstream leads. This is fed up to the Gold Group and the Tactical Group.
14.	Accountable Officers
	Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	28/08/20
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	02/09/20

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