



**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT COVER SHEET**

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>COVID-19 Emergency Planning Update (July 2020)</b>	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
<b>Meeting of:</b>	Corporate Management Team:	
	Leader and Deputy Leaders: <b>8<sup>th</sup> June 2020</b>	X
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group: <b>1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020</b>	X
	Cabinet: <b>13<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b>	
	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee Scrutiny Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being Committee	



Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	NO	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:			

**Essential Signatories:**

**ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE**

Monitoring Officer: **Angela Wakefield**

Date ..... Signature .....

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date ..... Signature .....

**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report to Cabinet**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**REPORT TITLE: COVID-19 Emergency Planning Update (July 2020)**

**PORTFOLIO: Leader of the Council**

**HEAD OF SERVICE: Sal Khan**

**CONTACT OFFICER: James Abbott (Corporate & Commercial Manager)  
Ext. No. x1244**

**WARD(S) AFFECTED: Non-Specific**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide senior officers and Members an update on the latest situation and associated response in East Staffordshire by the Council and its partners to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2. The report includes a backwards looking review of the response since the last Cabinet update presented on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, along with anticipated activities moving forward as the situation develops, considering all relevant aspects of the response including considerations regarding: Finance; People / HR; Community; and Partners / Stakeholders.

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. The Council and its partners continue to act effectively in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic emergency.
- 2.2. The response has been summarised in this report by considering the themes of: People and Processes; Service Changes and Communications; Community and Partners; and Finances.
- 2.3. It has been necessary for the Council to plan for and react to a range of challenges and pressures that have arisen as a result of the pandemic, however **throughout the response to the COVID-19 situation critical services have continued.**

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak of coronavirus disease COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- 3.2. To delay the spread of the virus the Government has made [a range of announcements implementing a range of measures on social distancing](#), and the Council has responded accordingly to ensure the operation of its facilities and services align to the current guidance and / or restrictions.
- 3.3. By law, category one responders (which includes all local authorities) have duties to plan and prepare for emergencies. Planning for civil emergencies and ensuring continuity of its own services is therefore a fundamental and ongoing element of East Staffordshire Borough Council's normal operation. The Council has a range of resilience plans in place to mitigate the impact of any emergency incident, for example service specific business continuity plans. It is also part of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) which is made up of multiple agencies who work together to plan and prepare for localised incidents and civil emergencies.
- 3.4. The SRF has facilitated a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 including senior representatives of all relevant responders and partners, for example local authorities, the emergency "blue-light" services, Public Health England, MHCLG, the military, the NHS, local hospitals and Clinical Commissioning Groups. Reporting to the SCG are a number of subgroups co-ordinating the tactical response, each with a focus on specific areas of the response.
- 3.5. In addition to the SCG the SRF is also facilitating with effect from 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020 a Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). This group is working in parallel to the SCG, and will support partners, communities and stakeholders to deliver the recovery activity associated with COVID-19.

### **4. Contribution to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1. This report contributes to all three Corporate Priorities as it is relevant to all Council services.

### **5. COVID-19 Emergency Planning Update (July 2020)**

#### **5.1. Response Overview**

- 5.1.1. It has been necessary for the Council to plan for and react to a range of challenges and pressures that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, however **throughout the response to the COVID-19 situation critical services have continued.**

5.1.2. The incident is having a strategically significant impact with “normal” business being affected. However the response is being managed at this time through the activation of local contingency plans and coordinated corrective action. Requests for mutual aid have not been necessary.

5.1.3. The response can be summarised by considering the following themes:

<b>People and Processes</b>	<b>Service Changes and Communications</b>
<b>Community and Partners</b>	<b>Finances</b>

5.1.4. The following table provides a summary overview of the Council’s direct response to these challenges, with full detail on this response, along with an outlook moving forward, provided in the subsequent sections of this report.

## Response Summary

### People and Processes (para 5.2)

- The Council has had a total of 24 absences for a duration of 7-14 days due to employees or their family members reporting COVID-19 symptoms. Of these, none remain absent and all 24 have now returned to work. The Council has another 14 people off work and not able to homework **(as of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**
- A “virtual” meeting process has been successfully implemented with the majority of Committees and Council groups having now held meetings using Zoom. This programme will continue to be further rolled out to Members and officers in relation to Full Council meetings moving forward.
- Individual service managers continue to review their own processes and revise where necessary in order to avoid unnecessary face to face office contact to protect staff and members of the public and align to current Government guidance and / or restrictions.
- It is envisaged that 69 of the 103 targets in the Corporate Plan may be affected by restrictions or pressures arising from the COVID-19 situation.

### Service Changes and Communications (para 5.3)

- Customer Service Centres (CSCs) in Burton and Uttoxeter remain closed at this time.
- The Outdoor Market reopened to non-essential retail on Thursday 4th June. The indoor Market Hall reopened on Monday 15th June 2020. Both are operating strict social distancing measures.
- Brewhouse Arts Centre and Civic Function Suite remain closed at this time.
- Measures to prepare the authority’s seven public toilet blocks started on Monday 15th June. The first one was opened on Tuesday 16th June with the remainder opened by the 21st June.
- Following changes to the Government’s guidance on meeting in open spaces the Council reopened its directly operated Tennis courts, Basketball courts and the Bramshall Bowling Green. All play areas and outdoor gyms remain closed at this time.
- Council Leisure Facilities remain closed at this time.
- There is ongoing communication regarding service changes and associated messaging from the Council and its partners.

### Community and Partners (para 5.4)

- The Council has continued to work with Staffordshire County Council and the SRF, to ensure that residents identified as “shielding” have registered for and are receiving NHS food / essentials parcels.
- Through the Environmental Health Team the Council is working with Staffordshire Districts and the County Council to support the investigation of any outbreaks identified.
- After successful delivery of the ‘Everyone In’ program, this was closed to new homeless presentations on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 meaning that after this date standard legislative arrangements apply. 4 homeless singles and couples are in temporary accommodation under the ‘Everyone In’ program, with 32 having been resettled in the community **(as of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020)**
- The Council in conjunction with local partners, has facilitated the safe reopening of the high streets on 15th June. A range of measures have been installed to ensure that residents and retailers can use key shopping areas safely with a view to ongoing review as communities start to return to the high streets
- A draft critical decisions pathway has been created for the Stronger Towns Fund Investment Plan for Burton, which includes actions in relation to pedestrian access across the River Trent as well as a change to the busiest junction within Burton (in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council). The Stronger Towns plan will feature an emphasis on walking and cycling.

### Finances (para 5.5)

- The Council’s allocation is £1,244,057 from the additional government funding of £3.2billion.
- The initial phase of the software to award Council Tax Hardship Fund payments has been received and tested. Just over 2,000 Council Tax payers who currently receive Council Tax Reduction will be entitled to a reduction of up to £150 off their Council Tax
- Issued 1,883 Small Business and Retail, Hospitality & Leisure grants totalling £22.08m to local ratepayers **(as of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**
- Awarded £19.75 million worth of Retail Discount Relief to 747 businesses and £263,468 worth of Nursery Discount Relief to 21 Nurseries **(as of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**
- On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May the Council opened its Discretionary Grant Fund to support small businesses. The Council has awarded Discretionary grant payments to 32 local businesses, totalling £320,000. The scheme has been reviewed and a second window for applications has been opened, extending the eligibility to more businesses in the borough and increasing the grant level
- Although the Town Centres reopened on 15<sup>th</sup> June the Council has delayed the reintroduction of car parking charges until 29<sup>th</sup> June.

## 5.2. People and Processes

5.2.1. As of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 the Council has 296 (directly employed) employees including casual staff. The Council has had a total of 24 absences for a duration of 7-14 days due to employees or their family members reporting COVID-19 symptoms. Of these, none remain absent and all 24 have now returned to work. The Council has another 14 people off work and not able to homework, due to their having an underlying health condition or being over 70 years old, including 4 casual workers. A weekly breakdown of absences can be seen in the table below:

<b>COVID-19 Related Absence Breakdown</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Headcount (incl. casuals)</b>	<b>No. absences due to COVID-19 sickness (self or household)</b>	<b>No. still absent on date</b>	<b>No. not working due to underlying health &amp; nature of work</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> April	295	15	6	14
8 <sup>th</sup> April	295	16	2	15
14 <sup>th</sup> April	294	16	2	15
20 <sup>th</sup> April	293	17	2	15
28 <sup>th</sup> April	293	20	3	16
4 <sup>th</sup> May	295	20	2	15
11 <sup>th</sup> May	295	20	0	15
18 <sup>th</sup> May	294	20	0	16
27 <sup>th</sup> May	294	22	2	16
1 <sup>st</sup> June	294	22	1	16
8 <sup>th</sup> June	294	23	0	16
15 <sup>th</sup> June	295	23	0	16
22 <sup>nd</sup> June	295	23	0	16
29 <sup>th</sup> June	296	24	0	14

5.2.2. A significant process change has been the move to electronic or “virtual” decision making. To allow members of the public to view the proceedings while Members debate agenda items with relevant officer support, the following Committees and other Council groups have now had meetings successfully held via Zoom:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of First “Virtual” Meeting</b>
Cabinet	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2020
Licensing General Sub-Committee	5 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Licensing Act Sub-Committee	5 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Licensing Committee	19 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Planning Committee and Virtual Site Visit	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Standards Committee	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2020
LAG / LOAG / IAAG	3 <sup>rd</sup> / 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
Development Plan Committee	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2020

Committee	Date of First “Virtual” Meeting
Scrutiny (CREHW) Committee	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
Scrutiny (AVFM) Committee	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2020

5.2.3. It is anticipated that the Full Council will have meetings undertaken virtually for the first time in coming weeks.

5.2.4. Individual service managers continue to review their own processes and revise where necessary in order to avoid unnecessary face to face office contact to protect staff and members of the public and align to current Government guidance and / or restrictions.

5.2.5. Similarly the Council continues to monitor its Corporate Plan and the objectives contained within that are likely to be directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the emergency response develops the Council will continue to review its performance measures and targets. At this stage it is envisaged that 69 of the 103 targets in the Corporate Plan may be affected by restrictions or pressures arising from the COVID-19 situation. These targets are detailed in Appendix 1.

### 5.3. Service Changes and Communications

5.3.1. A number of enforced changes following direct instruction issued by Government have been necessary, as well as the Council also implementing a number of service changes to effectively respond to the emergency at a local level. However throughout the response to the COVID-19 situation, critical services have continued.

5.3.2. A number of facilities were closed as a direct response to the ongoing situation. The latest situation and associated restoration information can be seen in the table below:

Facility	Date of Closure	Restoration Information
Customer Service Centres (CSCs) in Burton and Uttoxeter	24 <sup>th</sup> March	These facilities remain closed at this time.
Burton Market Hall and Outdoor Market	23 <sup>rd</sup> March	The Outdoor Market reopened to non-essential retail on Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> June. The indoor Market Hall reopened on Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020. Both are operating strict social distancing measures.
Brewhouse Arts Centre and Civic Function Suite	20 <sup>th</sup> March	These facilities remain closed at this time. The Civic Function Suite continued to support essential services to continue to be delivered such as Blood Donation.
Public Toilets	24 <sup>th</sup> March	Measures to prepare the authority’s seven public toilet blocks started on Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> June. The first one was opened on Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> June with the remainder opened by the 21 <sup>st</sup> June.
Play areas, tennis courts, basketball courts,	24 <sup>th</sup> March	Following changes to the Government’s guidance on meeting in open spaces the Council reopened its directly operated Tennis courts, Basketball courts and

Facility	Date of Closure	Restoration Information
Bramshall Bowling green and outdoor gyms		the Bramshall Bowling Green. All play areas and outdoor gyms remain closed at this time.
Council Leisure Facilities (Meadowside Leisure Centre, Uttoxeter Leisure Centre and Shobnall Leisure Complex), run by Everyone Active	20 <sup>th</sup> March	These facilities remain closed at this time.

5.3.3. Following their temporary suspension on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the Council resumed its Garden Waste Collection service on 20<sup>th</sup> April and its Bulky Waste Collection service on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

5.3.4. The Council has made alterations to funeral and cemetery arrangements in line with Government guidelines. The Council is providing limited vehicular access to the cemetery to member(s) of the public with limited mobility. Visitors are asked to contact the cemetery office and schedule an appointment.

5.3.5. There is ongoing communications in relation to service changes and related messaging. The top 10 social media posts from the last full month (in terms of customer reach) are below.

Top Posts by reach (number of users)			
ID	Date	Reach	Text
1	14 <sup>th</sup> May	20,605	£20m Small Business and Retail, Hospitality & Leisure grant funding has been paid to 1,711 East Staffordshire businesses.
2	1 <sup>st</sup> May	8,209	Staffordshire Day
3	5 <sup>th</sup> May	8,010	Washing your hands message.
4	18 <sup>th</sup> May	7,603	Information for people who have been, or are at risk of being, made redundant because of Covid-19
5	17 <sup>th</sup> May	7,272	Information from the @recyclenow website linked to the school curriculum to help teach children about recycling.
6	25 <sup>th</sup> May	5,752	How to dispose of PPE correctly
7	16 <sup>th</sup> May	5,325	Information regarding wearing a face covering when you are in an enclosed space.
8	24 <sup>th</sup> May	5,279	Rules relating to spending time in the countryside
9	3 <sup>rd</sup> May	5,268	Information from the National Business Response Network for SMEs and community groups needing help with business continuity or employee wellbeing
10	27 <sup>th</sup> May	4,952	Resumption of the Council's Bulky Waste Collection Service

5.3.6. As well its own messages, the Council has continued to share key communications from other partner organisations, ensuring these important messages are shared as widely as possible. Messages from the following partner agencies include: Public Health England; NHS; Various Government departments (DEFRA, DBEIS, DoE, Cabinet Office); Staffordshire County Council; Staffordshire Police; Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service; and Utility providers.

## 5.4. Community and Partners

### Community

- 5.4.1. The Council has continued to work with Staffordshire County Council and the SRF, to ensure that residents identified as “shielding” have registered for and are receiving NHS food / essentials parcels. Following the implementation of a temporary telephone call centre at the Brewhouse which went live on 28<sup>th</sup> April to receive incoming calls to register residents a decision was made to actively call all residents now on the shielding/unregistered list. Council officers have been undertaking calls to a list of 1950 residents to confirm they are safe and well (supported by friends, family or neighbours) or register them for the NHS scheme.
- 5.4.2. The Environmental Health Team is working with Staffordshire Districts and the County Council, and is taking the lead in the investigation of COVID-19 outbreaks identified as part of the Test and Trace service in high risk settings including business workplaces, homelessness settings and religious institutions.
- 5.4.3. In April, the Council’s Councillor Community Fund (CCF) re-opened for new applications, and in response to the pandemic, the portfolio holder encouraged Ward Councillors to make use of the CCF to support community groups and organisations who are providing assistance to residents during these difficult times. Over £4,000 in funding has been granted for them to deliver a range of activities including the provision of food bank services, activities to support children, hot meal delivery and food parcel schemes.

### Homelessness

- 5.4.1. The Council’s Housing Options Team responded to the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020 letter from Minister Hall Council by successfully delivering the strategy known as the ‘Everyone In’ program, and continues to do so by maintaining temporary accommodation provision for ‘Everyone In’ recipients until a settled accommodation option is identified. After careful consideration, the ‘Everyone In’ program was closed to new homeless presentations on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 meaning that after this date standard legislative arrangements apply, including the Homelessness Reduction Act. This program for homeless singles and couples is undertaken in addition to the performance of the existing legislative duties to families and others.
- 5.4.2. As of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 4 homeless singles and couples are in temporary accommodation under the ‘Everyone In’ program, with 32 having been resettled in the community. Efforts to resettle those that have been accommodated under this program have largely been completed with a number of avenues having being utilised; including via the Council commissioned Home4Me Service and local supported accommodation providers within the [Burton & East Staffs Homeless Partnership](#). Of the 4 remaining individuals, 2 are in the process of obtaining travel documents

to facilitate reconnection to their home country, one is being put forward for the Housing First Project and the remaining individual is undertaking support work to reduce his risks and open up options within supported accommodation.

- 5.4.3. A sweep of the borough undertaken by the Rough Sleepers Outreach Service on 16th June did not find anyone “sleeping rough”. This sweep included a comprehensive walk-through of Burton, as well as a team who went across to Uttoxeter and Rocester and the periphery of Burton.

#### Town Centres

- 5.4.4. The Council in conjunction with local partners, has facilitated the safe reopening of the Town Centres on 15<sup>th</sup> June. A range of measures have been installed to ensure that residents and retailers can use key shopping areas safely with a view to ongoing review as communities start to return to the high streets.

- 5.4.5. As non-essential shops start to reopen the Environmental Health Team are providing additional health and safety advice and information and will be undertaking spot checks to ensure controls are implemented where required.

- 5.4.6. A draft critical decisions pathway has been created for the Stronger Towns Fund Investment Plan for Burton, which includes actions in relation to pedestrian access across the River Trent as well as a change to the busiest junction within Burton (in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council).

- 5.4.7. The Stronger Towns plan will feature an emphasis on walking and cycling to create an “easy in and easy out” of our town centres. This will also feature encouragement to work from home into the future.

#### 5.5. Finances

- 5.5.1. Following a previous issue with the software which was flagged up nationally and with MHCLG, the initial phase of the software to award Council Tax Hardship Fund payments has been received and tested. Just over 2,000 Council Tax payers who currently receive Council Tax Reduction will be entitled to a reduction of up to £150 off their Council Tax bills for the current financial year. An additional software release is expected in late June to allow changes of circumstances relating specifically to Hardship Fund claims to be automatically recalculated. A portion of the Government funding has been set aside by the Council for any new Council Tax support claims it may receive during the rest of the financial year and the scheme will be reviewed before the end of quarter 2 to ensure the fund is being fully utilised.

- 5.5.2. The Council (as of 5pm on 26<sup>th</sup> June) has issued 1,883 Small Business and Retail, Hospitality & Leisure grants totalling £22.08m to local ratepayers. Recent small business grant administration figures show the

Council Revenues and Benefits team as first in the county and 15<sup>th</sup> in the country for speed of distribution.

5.5.3. As of 5pm 26<sup>th</sup> June the Council has awarded £19.75 million worth of Retail Discount Relief to 747 businesses and £263,468 worth of Nursery Discount Relief to 21 Nurseries.

5.5.4. On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May the Council opened its Discretionary Grant Fund to support small businesses in East Staffordshire. The scheme closed for applications at midnight on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The Council's scheme has been reviewed and a second window for applications has been opened, extending the eligibility to more businesses in the borough and increasing the grant level from £5,000 to £10,000 to all successful applicants (including those awarded so far). The Council has awarded Discretionary grant payments to 32 local businesses, totalling £320,000.

5.5.5. Although the Town Centres reopened on 15<sup>th</sup> June the Council has delayed the reintroduction of car parking charges until 29<sup>th</sup> June. The reintroduction date coincides with the launch of a new app which will help protect members of the public by reducing the need to interact with physical parking machines and handle loose change avoiding the risks of cross contamination. The launch of the app is being communicated to further encourage visitors to the Town Centres.

5.5.6. The Council's allocation from central government funding to help local government respond to the COVID-19 pandemic is £1,244,057. This allocation is to be used to offset against the COVID-19 related financial pressures experienced by the Council. These pressures not only include additional costs but also more significantly a reduction to the income levels the Council receives that are used to ensure that funding is available to provide essential services to residents. The impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy will be extensive and this is being monitored and updated on a regular basis to reflect the most recent information. The Council's underlying financial position is robust and this provides a strong foundation of financial resilience during these unprecedented circumstances.

## **6. Financial Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: **Lisa Turner***

6.1. The main financial issues arising from this Report are as follows:

6.1.1. The financial position of the Council and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this position are not specifically considered within this report.

6.1.2. The Council, like all local authorities, is facing significant financial pressures due to COVID-19. These pressures not only include additional costs but also more significantly a reduction to the income levels the

Council receives which are used to provide essential services to residents. The impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy will be extensive and this is being monitored and updated on a regular basis to reflect the most recent information. The Council's underlying financial position is robust and this provides a strong foundation of financial resilience during these unprecedented circumstances.

6.1.3. The financial issues directly arising from this report are as detailed in Section 5.5.

## **7. Risk Assessment and Management**

7.1. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

7.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

7.2.1. Sharing information across officer and Member portfolios on the current situation with Council facilities and services allows for a joined up overview of the response to challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 emergency.

7.3. **Negative** (Threats):

7.3.1. The situation and data relating to the response is constantly developing. It should be noted that where data is presented the associated dates for the validity of that data will be provided in this report.

7.4. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

## **8. Legal Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team:*  
**Angela Wakefield.**

8.1. There are no significant legal issues arising from this Report.

## **9. Equalities and Health**

9.1. **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

9.2. **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

## **10. Human Rights**

10.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

**11. Sustainability** (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

11.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) **N/A**

**12. Recommendation(s)**

12.1. To note the update detailed within the report.

**13. Background Papers**

13.1. None

**14. Appendices**

14.1. **Appendix 1:** Corporate Plan Targets 2020/21 Impacted by COVID-19