


REPORT TO EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

25 March 2020

Subject:	Resilience Plan Update: Covid-19
Director:	David Stevens, Chief Executive
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Neil Cox

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee endorse the Council's resilience plan to address the Covid-19 outbreak.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report presents the Council's initial plans to address the varied and significant challenges associated with the Covid-19 virus. It is important to note that this plan will continue to evolve over the coming weeks and months as the situation develops and the Council plans and responds to address emerging issues. The resilience plan is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The coronavirus outbreak has presented significant global challenges since the strain was first discovered in Wuhan, China during December 2019. Since then, there have been a rapidly increasing number of cases identified across the world including the United Kingdom.

- 2.2 On 2 March 2020, an emergency meeting of the Government's COBRA Committee was convened which resulted in the publication of the Coronavirus Action Plan on 3 March 2020, outlining countermeasures being taken by the health and care system across the UK to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. The response to coronavirus is an evolving challenge which is attempting to keep pace with the nature, scale and location of the threat in the UK as the scientific understanding of the virus develops.
- 2.3 The Government's Plan includes a four stage strategy for response:
- Contain
 - Delay
 - Research
 - Mitigate
- 2.4 On 12 March 2020, it was announced by the Prime Minister that the "Delay" phase had commenced, the aim of which is to delay the spread of the virus so that the NHS and key public services are better able to deal with the most vulnerable. The key focus of this phase is preventing the spread of coronavirus through a combination of self-isolation, when symptoms are present, and social distancing.
- 2.5 The combination of these measures has resulted in the banning major public events, school closures and requesting everybody limits their movements and interactions as far as possible.

3 THE CURRENT POSITION

Sandwell's response

- 3.1 At a national level lead responsibility for providing overall multi-agency command, control and co-ordination throughout the different phases of the pandemic lies with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) supported by Public Health England (PHE).
- 3.2 At a local level, Sandwell has strong relationships across its health and social care system which will form the foundation of our response to the outbreak. In addition to this the Council has reviewed and updated all of its business continuity plans to ensure it is able to respond to the needs of its residents during what will undoubtedly be a period of unprecedented and significant disruption.

3.3 However, in recognition of the vast range of support that residents, businesses, voluntary & community sector organisations and our own staff group are going to require during the coming months the Sandwell COVID19 plan has been developed to outline the Council's response to this crisis and sit alongside our existing business continuity arrangements.

3.4 Our plan outlines our five key priorities, the actions we have either already implemented, or are about to implement, our key partners and how we will communicate with all key stakeholders of the council. Our key priorities are as follows:

- Health & Social Care
- Citizen & Communities
- Infrastructure & Supplies
- Business & Economic impact
- Organisational impact.

3.5 Health & Social Care:

Protecting and supporting our elderly and vulnerable residents through this period has to be our primary focus, to do this we will work with partners across the health and social care economy to ensure that our residents, particularly those who are vulnerable, have caring responsibilities and those with underlying health conditions receive the support they require.

Citizen & Communities:

In recognising that the health and wellbeing of our residents is our key priority, and that supporting people to maintain this they will need additional support we will utilise the strength of our strong and resilient communities to help us support those people with the greatest need.

Infrastructure & Supplies:

We expect that significant pressure will be put on our existing infrastructure and supply chains which will limit the access our residents have to the vital goods and supplies they require. Therefore, we will work with our key partners to ensure that services that are vital to the borough's infrastructure continue to operate effectively.

Business & Economic Impact:

We know that the pandemic will create financial pressures for businesses and individuals alike, which is likely to affect our residents more acutely than in other parts of the country due to the levels of deprivation they already experience. In response to the financial challenges create we will do everything in our power to minimise the impact of these challenges and the pressure they create.

Organisational Impact:

The disruption caused by the virus will have a significant impact on our organisation as it will with many others. We will work to minimise the impact of this disruption and ensure that our critical services continue to be delivered without interruption whilst maintaining support to our staff group and key group workers through this very challenging time.

4 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 4.1 The response to the coronavirus outbreak is fast moving with developments playing out directly through the national media on a daily basis. Through our corporate communication channels we will aim to provide clear and consistent communications to our residents, key stakeholders and partners.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 There are no alternative options at this time. The Council must target it's resources in a way that it is able to flexibly meet the challenges and demands on council services and resources.

6 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 At this time we are attempting to assess the financial implications across three strands:

Loss of Income

The Council's income streams are expected to be significantly reduced by the suspension of services, reduced activity and a potential increase in non-payment as residents reprioritise their finances in response to changes in personal circumstances.

Additional Expenditure

Addressing the key priorities identified above will generate increased Council expenditure. It is not possible to estimate the potential costs in such a rapidly evolving environment however a process has been developed to record and identify relevant expenditure.

Central Government Funding

On 20 March 2020 the Government announced a Covid-19 funding package which includes £1.6bn to support local authorities; the Council's share of this will be £12.494m. The grant will not be ringfenced and it is expected to be paid in a single instalment on 3 April 2020.

- 6.2 In the short term the key financial objective will be management of the Council's cashflow and the upfront payment of the emergency grant will be of significant assistance. In the longer term, the priority will become management of the Council's overall financial position and the impact upon available reserves.

7 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has convened the Emergency Committee who have put in place governance and decision-making arrangements to enable the authority to respond appropriately and effectively.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 N/A

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 N/A

10 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 N/A

11 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 11.1 The plan will need to flex and evolve in accordance with the developing Covid-19 situation.

12 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 These are outlined in the body of the report.

13 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 13.1 None associated with this report

14 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 The Committee is requested to consider and endorse this initial plan, recognising that it is a live document and will continue to evolve in accordance with the needs of the Borough. The Council must be in a position to respond to this situation as it develops over the coming weeks and months.

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 None associated with this report

16 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Sandwell COVID19 Plan

David Stevens
Chief Executive

1

Sandwell COVID19 Plan

As a Local Authority we are taking a proactive response towards dealing with and mitigating the impact of the Covid19 pandemic. As always, our priority is to act in the best interests of the borough and protect the health and wellbeing of our residents.

2

Health & Social Care

We will work with partners in both health and social care to ensure that our residents, particularly those that are vulnerable, continue to receive the support they require.

3

1. We are keeping vulnerable people supported and well by maintaining the consistent delivery of social care
2. We are working with our care and support provider market to ensure they remain operational and can continue to deliver services
3. In partnership with health, we are working to support and maintain the flow of people out of hospital
4. We are implementing arrangements to make sure that disruption to services does not reduce our ability to support vulnerable Children effectively.

4

Daily monitoring:

- Staffing levels across the whole organisation
- Viability of critical services
- Patterns and trends in queries being received by the incident room
- Engagement and feedback with regional and national networks for all directorates
- Financial pressures and cash flows

Citizens & Communities

The health and wellbeing of our citizens is our key priority and we recognise that during this time they will need additional support. To achieve this we will draw on the strength of our strong and resilient communities.

1. We will implement a range of initiatives which aim to keep people safe and able to access essential supplies, recognising that this need will be increased when vulnerable and isolated individuals are social distancing or self-isolating.
2. Working with our voluntary and community sector partners we will seek to mobilise communities to support each other
3. Providing additional support to our residents who suffer from deprivation and debt problems
4. We will work with partners to promote and support community cohesion, along with recognising cultural sensitivities of our communities

5

Key Partners:

- Health
- Independent Sector Providers
- Community Organisations
- Emergency Services
- Neighbouring Authorities
- Regional & National networks
- Council suppliers
- Central Government
- Local industry
- Residents

Infrastructure & Supplies

We will respond to pressure that is put on supply chains and our residents access to vital goods they require to remain well. This will include ensuring services that are vital to the borough's infrastructure continue to operate effectively.

1. We are working to ensure that our internal services and external partners have access to the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment they require to continue providing services
2. We have established a support team which will support our most vulnerable and isolated residents continue to have access to food and key supplies through periods of isolation and distancing.
3. Our enforcement services will work to ensure that local and national guidance to promote public safety in premises across the borough is implemented appropriately.
4. Our non-critical services will be redirected towards assisting with transport and logistical arrangements required to continue supporting our vulnerable residents.

6

Media & Communications:

- We are issuing daily communications to our staff group, providing updates on the situation and advice where required. We have created an incident room to respond to all key internal issues and a Hub to support our residents
- We are utilising all available channels of communication to share key messages with public, this includes social media and creating new access lines to speak to key services directly. the Communication with the public
- We are in constant communication with partners where possible to get an overview of demands and provide support

Businesses & Economic Impact

We know that the pandemic will create financial pressures for businesses and individuals alike, and in response we will provide support where possible to minimise the impact of this and pressure that it creates.

1. We continue to provide support and advice to local businesses on any concerns they may have, or guidance that has been issued in light of the pandemic
2. We are continually working to understand the financial impact of the disruption caused by the impact of the pandemic on both the council and our residents so that we can identify potential steps to mitigate the impact.
3. Where possible we will support both business and individuals to access any appropriate central government support that has been introduced as a response to the pandemic

Organisational Impact

The disruption caused by the virus will have a significant impact on our organisation as it will with many others. We will work to minimise the impact of this disruption and ensure that our critical services continue to be delivered without interruption.

1. We are prioritising the delivery of critical services, and planning our response to potential reductions in staffing availability
2. We are supporting our workforce to follow guidance from Public Health so that they are able to stay safe, this includes working from home where possible and self-isolating and social distancing where required
3. We are communicating with our Trade Union colleagues on a daily basis to address issues as they arise
4. As far as possible we are attempting to maintain the delivery of business as usual
5. We are rationalising the use of council buildings to ensure we can maintain the additional cleansing requirements to keep them open.