


## REPORT TO EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

22 April 2020

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Covid-19 Response Update</b>
<b>Director:</b>	<b>David Stevens – Chief Executive</b>
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	David Stevens

### **DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Committee endorse the steps taken across Council Services as part of the initial response and resilience plan to address the Coronavirus outbreak.

### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) across the United Kingdom, Sandwell Council has provided a co-ordinated response across services and with partner organisations to support its communities. This report highlights a number of key priorities that the Council has been focussing on during the initial phases of it's response. Other update reports will be provided to future meetings.

### **2. IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030**

Whilst the Council is endeavouring to maintain core services, much of its resources are targeted toward addressing the many implications for Sandwell's resident and business communities arising from the virus.

### **3. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

The impact of the crisis response to Covid 19 has created a prolonged period in which the organisation is having to work within an emergency response arena. Strategic, tactical and operational decisions are being made to deal with urgent emerging problems.

The impact on our most vulnerable individuals and communities generates significant unprecedented issues for the ability to operate public services effectively, however, the Council continues to respond to the current situation and plan for the projected spread and impact of the virus.

A series of short update reports are attached that provide a briefing on the Council's response across the following areas:

### **Resilience Plan (appendix 1)**

On 25 March 2020, the Emergency Committee approved the council's Resilience Plan in response to the coronavirus outbreak. This set out the council's initial plans to address the varied and significant challenges that have arisen and acknowledged that the Plan needed to evolve in accordance with the needs of the Borough. Progress in relation to the resilience plan is attached and informs the content of related update reports from other service areas.

### **Shielding and Support to the most Vulnerable (appendix 2)**

Following the central government announcement that the most vulnerable in communities should self-isolate, the Council has established a central welfare hub that is providing support to any identified individuals and families. In excess of 2000 food parcels have been delivered across the Borough with additional support to ensure that medications are delivered and isolated individuals are in contact with sources of social support.

### **Adult Social Care (appendix 3)**

A collaborative approach with partner organisations continues to ensure that the Council complies with statutory care responsibilities. Whilst the Government has relaxed some duties in relation to the Care Act 2014, the Council continues to work in tandem with local hospitals, care providers and commissioned services to respond to the pressures associated with the virus. Interim arrangements to assess care needs and hospital discharge pathways are highlighted in the update report.

### **Children's Services (appendix 4)**

A range of guidance has been provided by the Department for Education (DfE) over the past few weeks and the links are included at the end of this document. Guidance for schools has addressed school opening, free school meals, safeguarding responsibilities, exams and qualifications and school funding. The social care and vulnerable children guidance recognises that local authorities will not be able to meet all their statutory duties and in some instances are preparing additional regulations to mitigate against this.

### **Registration and Bereavement Services (appendix 5)**

The Covid-19 situation provides significant and prolonged challenges to these services areas. A co-ordinated response across the Black Country aims to facilitate comprehensive support for those facing the most difficult family circumstances due to the virus.

## **Support to Employees (appendix 6)**

Our staff are vital in helping Sandwell to combat the many issues that our communities are currently facing. It's essential therefore, that we do all we can to support and protect our staff who are rising to the many challenges currently presented.

## **Democratic Engagement (appendix 7)**

The Government introduced new regulations from 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 which enable elected member and public remote attendance and participation in meetings. The Council is currently testing its IT solution to enable this.

A further report on temporary changes to the Councils decision making provisions, outlining the detail of the legislation is included on the agenda for the meeting.

## **Financial Impact (appendix 8)**

There is likely to be a significant impact on overall financial position of the organisation either from decisions that the Council makes to mitigate the impact on businesses and citizens or impacts that occur outside the Council's control or result from carrying out its statutory duties during this period of emergency response. A revised financial framework was agreed by the Emergency Committee and these financial controls will be maintained as robustly as possible. It is also recognised that the Council may well be faced with making decisions that have a significant financial impact with no guarantee that these pressures will be compensated in full by way of additional government funding.

The council continues to compile, maintain and monitor data on expenditure and loss of income arising from its response to Covid-19.

## **4. THE CURRENT POSITION**

The council continues to robustly address the many challenges that the virus poses. The coming weeks will enable the council to more effectively assess and plan its extended response.

## **5. CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

The Council is working closely with partner and stakeholders to maintain a robust response to the coronavirus. We are maintaining strong working relationships with neighbouring authorities and are providing a co-ordinated response to this situation where possible.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

N/A

## **7. STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are significant resource implications arising from the Council's response to the Coronavirus. These are highlighted in the relevant appendices.

## **8. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 Central Government has issued a series of new legislative measures to enable the Council and partner organisations to respond to the many challenges that the virus brings.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

There are no direct issues or implications relating to equality.

## **10. DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

There are no direct issues or implications relating specifically to data protection.

## **11. CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

There are no direct issues or implications relating specifically to crime and disorder. It should be noted that there are additional risks arising from the speed at which the Council is having to respond to the virus and that appropriate mitigations are in place wherever possible.

## **12. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

The extent of demand placed on the council continues to evolve in line with the spread of the virus. The sustainability of the current situation within existing resources is routinely evaluated

## **13. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

The impact on the health and wellbeing of the population of Sandwell continues to be monitored. Current and projected infection and mortality rates will be impacted by the local response to, and compliance with, social distancing guidelines.

## **14. IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

The report has no direct implication on Council managed property or land.

## **15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **16. APPENDICES:**

Update Reports Appendices 1-8

**David Stevens**  
**Chief Executive**