

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

1 June 2021

Subject: COVID-19 Final Update

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Health & Wellbeing

Key Decision: Non-Key

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of activity to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet in March. Since the last report the roadmap for exiting lockdown has been followed with further relaxations coming into place.

Support for businesses, vulnerable groups, care homes and educational settings continues.

This will be the final update to cabinet as a separate report on this subject and work to address the legacy of the pandemic will be embedded into the council's new business plan.

Proposal(s)

Cabinet are asked to

- Continue to encourage all residents to download the NHS Test and Trace app on their phone.
- Continue to encourage all residents to answer a call received from 0300 456 0100 as it may be the local contact tracing team within the Council
- Continue to encourage all residents to follow national guidance
- Continue to encourage residents to attend for vaccination when invited and to continue to follow national guidance after vaccination
- Thank residents that voted in the recent elections and encourage use of a postal vote for the upcoming PCC election on 19 August
- To note the work underway as we approach the final stages of the government roadmap

Reason for Proposal(s)

Wiltshire Council continues to work closely with partners to deliver in a rapidly changing environment.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To provide a brief summary of the key activity mitigating the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet in March.

Background

2. As of 18 May, 4,452,527 people in the UK have tested positive for COVID-19. Further information is available [online](#). The data also suggest that there were a total of 127,694 deaths within 28 days of a positive test.
3. As of 18 May 2021 in Wiltshire there have now been 17,390 people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and the rate of cases per 100,000 in Wiltshire in the last 7 days was 11.6, which is below the national average of 22. Up to 30 April in Wiltshire there have been 844 registered deaths in total that included COVID-19 on the death certificate.

Main Considerations for the Council

4. On 17 May further relaxations came into force, with guidance emphasising personal responsibility within the rules. Groups of up to six people or two households can now meet indoors and overnight visits are allowed (ventilation is encouraged). People can meet in groups of up to 30 outdoors, and up to 30 can attend weddings and other life events. Maximum numbers attending funerals is now to be determined by venue size and care home residents can have up to five named visitors (providing they test negative). Pubs and cafes can serve customers indoors and museums and galleries have also reopened.
5. The final stage of relaxations set out in the roadmap is set for midsummer's day (21 June) contingent on the data continuing to move in the right direction. Government will make its decision on this the week beforehand (14 June). Wiltshire Council is working closely with its partners in English Heritage and Wiltshire Police to ensure that summer solstice events such as that at Stonehenge can go ahead if it is permitted to do so.
6. Elections for unitary divisions; city, town and parish council elections; the Swindon and Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner election; and various Neighbourhood Plan referendums took place at the start of May. These were

one of the largest set of elections in the country and a significant logistical challenge; however, Wiltshire Council ensured these were held in a COVID-19 secure way. Residents were encouraged to, where possible, vote by post and we will be continuing this messaging for the forthcoming PCC election to be held on 19 August.

Test and Trace and Isolate

7. Rates of successful contact tracing for COVID cases remain high across Wiltshire; as of 14th May 98% of Wiltshire cases are being successfully reached by either NHS Test and Trace or our Wiltshire Local Tracing Partnership, which is delivered by the Public Health team. Through contact tracing individuals are also provided access to support services to facilitate and support adherence to self-isolation requirements, increasing the ability of people to adhere to the self-isolation requirements and thus reducing risk of COVID-19 transmission in our communities.
8. Currently cases pass to our local tracing team if NHS Test & Trace are unable to reach individuals over 24-48 hours. Over the coming months we will continue to work closely with Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace to further build upon the success of our local tracing partnership by introducing Local 0, which enables our local tracing team to take on contact tracing responsibilities as soon as case details are uploaded onto the NHS Test and Trace system, with an aim to increase our 'rates of success' contact tracing even further.
9. People are reminded to provide full and accurate contact details when accessing COVID-19 testing and asked to answer the phone if NHS Test and Trace try to contact individuals via 0300 013 5000 or the local team via 0300 456 0100.

Community (asymptomatic) Testing

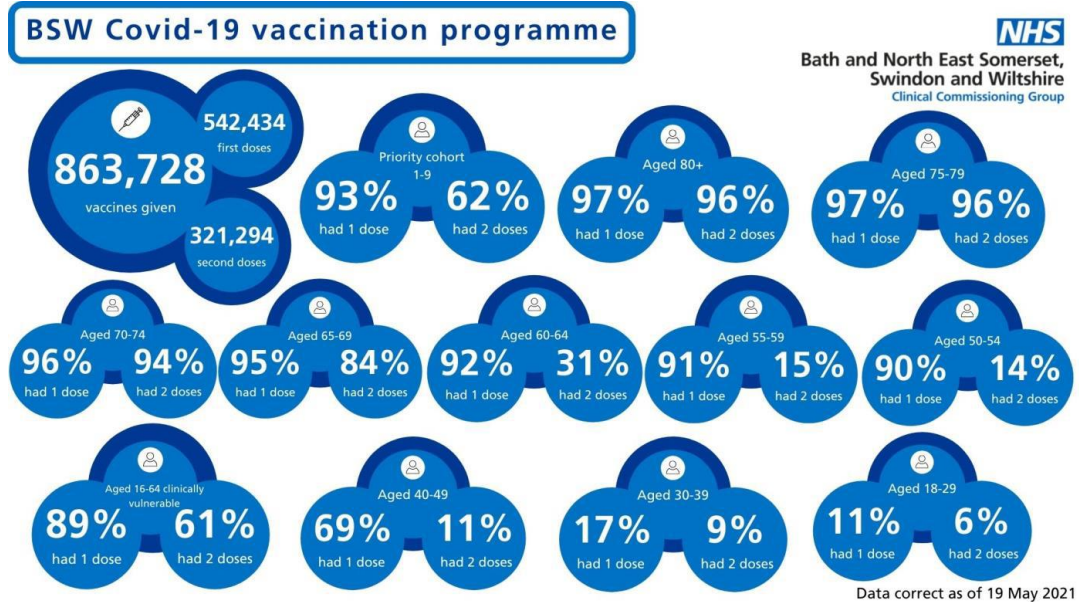
10. During the pandemic Wiltshire stood up an asymptomatic testing offer for its local communities to access, which included four asymptomatic test sites (ATS) operating across the county; Salisbury, Devizes, Chippenham and Trowbridge. The sites operate a booking process and used the self-administered lateral flow tests, which provide a result within 30 minutes. During their operation more than 4,000 tests completed. As the national testing programme developed, Wiltshire further enhanced the community testing offer by offering a 'collect' option for home testing using the lateral flow tests. The community collect model offered greater accessibility to our Wiltshire populations who wished to undertake the government's recommended twice weekly testing. Wiltshire has seven 'collect' sites across the county including Monkton Park, Bourne Hill, Devizes Leisure Centre, Calne Community Campus, The Vale Community Campus, Nadder Centre and Corsham Community Campus. To date, there have been 2,650 test kits handed out. Our community testing offer is supplemented by other collect options available through pharmacy collect, as well as symptomatic testing continuing to be available at The Beehive in Salisbury, The Avenue in Warminster and The Greyhound in Trowbridge.

Mass Vaccination

11. As of Wednesday 19 May, the BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG vaccine teams have carried out a total of 863,728 vaccinations, made up of 542,434 first

doses and 321,294 second doses.

- In the week following the government’s announcement to open the vaccine invite to people in their 30s, almost one in five people aged between 30 and 39 in their region have received their first dose. More than two thirds of people in their 40s have also had their first vaccine, with a further one in ten having had both doses. Preparations to meet the government’s aim of now providing second doses within eight weeks of the first continue.



- Our Public Health colleagues are working together with BSW CCG, BaNES and Swindon on the Vaccination Bus. It started in Wiltshire on 10 May, travelling to areas where data showed lower vaccine uptake and increased hesitancy with the need for engagement within communities. The bus provided the opportunity for individuals to have extended conversations with clinicians and put forward their concerns. The project was not advertised publicly, the engagement has been through ongoing outreach work with community leaders, faith groups and public health workers.
- A volunteer from West Wiltshire Racial Equality Council attended for her second vaccine and our comms captured this to share. The bus also parked outside the Bangladeshi Centre in Melksham on Eid and vaccinated members of the mosque after morning prayers. 166 individuals were vaccinated in total from targeted areas and the feedback received was positive. Feedback below is from Studley Green Vaccination Clinic on 14 May.

Why did you decide to use the vaccination bus?

I have been worried about having the vaccine and have been thinking about it and talking to people about it. I have been hearing about all the work people have been doing. When I found out about the bus being here today, I thought that if health workers are going to all that effort, then I must go and have it to protect myself and my community.

- A vaccination narrowboat (Litania) started the return journey from Wootton Rivers to Darlington Wharf on 14th May to administer 2nd doses. Engagement work has been done along the Kennet and Avon canal by Julian House outreach workers and flyers have been left on boats. 261 live-aboard boaters are hoped to be fully vaccinated by 27th May.

16. Early stage planning discussions are in place regarding the Vaccination Bus attending to vaccinate factory workers who classically come under the 'hard to reach' and vulnerable categories. This project could lead to the bus attending other locations with staff deemed 'hard to reach'.

Outbreak Management

17. We are continuing to support settings such as businesses and educational settings (including early years) where outbreaks occur to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The number of outbreaks in the county are decreasing, however, we cannot be complacent as we will still see outbreaks once we progress along the government roadmap and restrictions are lifted.
18. Variants and mutations (VAM) of COVID-19 are one of the biggest concerns and requires us to work closely with Public Health England to help with contact tracing and testing where variants of concern (VOC) or variants under investigation (VUI) are identified. The opening up of international travel is likely to see the incidences of these increase and may result in localised surge testing.

Community spaces and engagement

19. On 29 March outdoor courts and pitches reopened for bookings under COVID-secure risk assessments. After 12 April, we began reopening council leisure centres and libraries and classes and our active health programme is back up and running as is Get Wiltshire Walking and our Running programme.

Wellbeing Hub

20. Since the end of February 2021 the government extended its clinically extremely vulnerable criteria and as a result the hub has had a significant increase in activity (over 9,000 new people identified as being CEV). The hub continued to identify and contact these people and offer them support as well as continuing to support members of the public who raise queries around current lockdown guidance and refer concerns or issues relating to business and organisations to the public protection/ public health team.
21. Since the shielding criteria ended on 23 April 2021 the hub has ceased contacting those individuals who are CEV as per government guidelines however, the hub still receives this data to enable us to respond rapidly should shielding be re-introduced. The hub is now embedded into Advice and Contact as we move to ensure the hub activity becomes business as usual.
22. The Wellbeing hub and community resilience partnership group (including voluntary and community sector organisations) met weekly during the initial response phase. These meetings have continued since their inception and continued to meet fortnightly to ensure a multiagency response is in place, however, as we move through the roadmap, these will move to monthly.

Care Homes

23. Following a successful vaccination programme and continued adherence to strict infection, prevention and control measures, resident and staff cases

remain low. The 7-day average of resident cases was 0 on 12 May while the equivalent staff average is 0.2. Only 6 homes had any reported cases.

24. In the week ending 12th May, for the fourth week running, we have had no Covid-19 deaths registered in the homes. Regular resident and staff testing, stringent infection prevention and control measures and safe visiting arrangements have all contributed to the decreasing case numbers across care homes, and care home staff are thanked for their continued efforts during what has been a challenging year.
25. We continue to work with care homes on the co-ordination of safe visiting following the 17th May roadmap milestone which allows residents to have up to 5 regular visitors (up from 2 currently) and also a number of activities are now permitted which would not require a 14-day isolation on return to the home, including attending medical appointments, visiting day centres and outdoor visits.

Health and Care

26. Since the previous cabinet report, COVID-19 infection rates have been decreasing steadily in the three acute hospitals and the numbers are now consistently within the range of 10-15 cases across all three settings. As a result, the number of individuals requiring a place in a designated setting on discharge has significantly reduced and can be accommodated within the community hospital settings. There remains however significant demand for community services to support urgent and emergency care and flow across Wiltshire. The HomeFirst pathway continues to experience increasing number of referrals and there may be a need to identify and source additional capacity to support an expected increase in demand this winter. Detailed demand and capacity planning is being undertaken currently to ensure these decisions in terms of community and bed-based care can be made in a timely way.
27. Updated Hospital Discharge guidance was recently [published](#) and further guidance is also anticipated. Guidance is expected to promote the requirement that the majority of people on discharge should return to their home and community. An update regarding associated funding to support the discharge pathways for the remainder of this financial year (beyond September) is also expected.
28. PPE drops will continue until the end of March 2022 and the Local Authority will continue to take delivery of PPE for local organisations that cannot access this via the PPE portal. Our current PPE supply continues to be healthy, and we can meet any increase demand that we may experience if there were to be any increase in infections. Monthly reviews continue with procurement to ensure commercial suppliers have adequate stocks/lead times with discussions regarding post Brexit. There are currently no concerns.

Education and Skills

29. During March there were 93 confirmed covid cases in education settings, 1935 pupils and 115 staff were required to isolate. These figures declined across April to 18 confirmed cases and 65 pupils and 7 staff being required to isolate. Secondary schools are continuing to use lateral flow tests with both pupils and staff to identify potential asymptomatic cases; primary schools are using these tests with staff only. Following a positive LFT, a PCR test is taken.

30. Following the full return to school by all pupils, attendance has been monitored closely. Pupils with low attendance are being identified and support is being offered from the Education Welfare Service (EWS), SEND, school effectiveness and social care teams. Following the introduction of the Positive Return to Education Plan (PREP) by the Education Welfare Service (EWS) we have 34 pupils whose attendance is being supported with this approach.
31. The EWS continues to respond to notifications of Elective Home Education (EHE), the overall caseload stands currently at 713 with a rise of 19 across April. The EWS works with schools and families where it is identified that pupils may be removed from roll for the purposes of EHE so that families are fully informed of their responsibilities.
32. With the absence of formal examinations for GCSEs and A levels and statutory data submission for phonics, KS1 and 2, School Effectiveness are offering all primary schools the opportunity to submit their end of key stage data for internal analysis and school improvement purposes. This will be a voluntary offer and cannot be used for accountability. The same is also offered for KS4 and 5. This will allow all schools to have comparative data to other schools within Wiltshire and national benchmarks against all those schools who have also submitted.
33. Early Years Providers who have had to close due to an outbreak have been compensated for their lost private income hours through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). This fund has also been used for PPE and cleaning in early years settings and out of school clubs as well as covering the 20% of costs not covered by the Job Retention Scheme for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable staff who have been unable to work.
34. All settings are currently open with only two reported cases of COVID in early years settings in the past eight weeks. Three and Four year old Early Years Entitlement attendance in settings was 94% of that in Spring 2020 (pre-COVID). 70% of children who are eligible for Early Years Entitlement for Two Year Olds (Better2gether Funding) are accessing a place.
35. There has been limited Holiday Club provision (5-11 year olds) available due to COVID secure reasons, as restrictions still apply. A brochure has been produced for each holiday period and has resulted in 30 additional children having access to childcare over each holiday period, mainly through childminders.

Post-16

36. The Careers Hub is currently performing above national average in the vast majority of areas and for overall performance averages. The Hub has provided Headteachers, Senior Leadership Teams and Career Leaders with a range of suitable activities to ensure that Year 11 and Year 13 pupils remain engaged with employability and transitions activities until the end of June. Data tracking tasks are underway to ensure that any young person without a secure September Guarantee place is identified and supported via the NEET Service (Employment and Skills team). Career Leaders have been supported by the local Get Ahead NEET programme to ensure that any pupil at risk of becoming NEET is supported prior to the end of this academic year.
37. The Careers Hub are providing a range of funded activities for all secondary schools and colleges, these include virtual employer encounters workshops, a

range of virtual work experience options, a virtual SEND conference, and a £1,000 bursary on evidence that a stable careers programme is in place. Additionally, a range of student facing activities are being delivered, these include a virtual 'Meet the Training Provider' event, a virtual Careers Fair and virtual motivational talks on progressing into the workplace or onto further study.

Inspections

38. Ofsted have completed 4 section 8 inspections during term 4. These inspections have been full one day on-site inspections looking at whether schools are taking effective action; they are ungraded. All Wiltshire schools that have been inspected have been judged as taking effective action. Good schools who have not been inspected during the 5 year window may also be inspected during the summer term.

Education Recovery

39. There has been no national prioritisation of any of the English curriculum areas from the DfE – this is due to the fact that both reading and writing are progressive skills-based curricula. However, as a local authority we have provided guidance and support for schools – through written materials and recorded webinars – to help leaders and teachers consider areas where children may have the biggest gaps and support for how these might be filled. This is all available via Right Choice. Training and CPD for teachers and Teachinf Assistants has continued through lockdown with many webinars recorded and broadcast covering the core foundations in phonics, reading, writing and vocabulary.

40. The DfE issued guidance for Primary schools. This guidance prioritised the most important knowledge and understanding within each year group and important connections between these mathematical topics. A webinar was made available to all schools taking them through this guidance and advising them how to address their curriculum for the summer term. Resources have been made available through Right Choice to support schools with developing fluency and there are webinars available to support this.

41. To ensure smooth transition at the end of the year resources have been provided to encourage accurate transfer of information. A webinar has been recorded for transition to secondary schools and this is freely available so KS3 teachers are aware of what has been taught.

School Transport

42. Secondary age pupils are still required to wear a face-covering (subject to medical exemptions) whilst on transport, whether that is a dedicated vehicle or a public bus with communications to that effect sent to head teachers and operators asking for their support in achieving compliance. Home to school transport continues to operate fully. The duplicate vehicles continue in operation to ensure that social distancing can be maintained at peak time and that the general travelling public are separated from school pupils.

Digital Devices

43. A further 250 digital devices have been issued during April to disadvantaged and vulnerable children across our Secondary and Primary schools. This means we have distributed over 1,400 digital devices to school children on

the back of the DfE initiative launched in June 2020.

Free School Meals

44. 9,500 children eligible for Free School Meals were provided with funding during the Easter Break to cover lunches for 10 days. This funding was secured from the DfE and amounted to approximately £285,000 for the two week period. Each eligible child received £30 in total. Schools received the funding and made local decisions to provide the most suitable solution for the family situation.

Economy

45. The team have continued to provide a bespoke service to grants awarded to businesses:

- Small Business/ Retail Hospitality and Leisure and Discretionary Grants awarded £95M to 8209 businesses between April 2020 – September 2020.
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (November 2020-ongoing) has awarded £40.48M
- Additional Restrictions Grant (November 2020 – ongoing) has awarded £12.54M
- RESTART grants (April 2021- ongoing) have awarded £18M
- 25,959 grants have been made across these schemes.

46. In total: 34,168 grant awards have been made totalling £165M since April 2020. 40,000 responses have been sent to businesses.

47. Reopening advice and guidance for businesses has been updated at each step of the gov's roadmap and is published at <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/business-advice-support-covid19>. This includes, general guidance for businesses, specific guidance for pubs, bars and takeaways, plus hospitality, and hairdressers/barbers. More detailed guidance, such as checklists for safe reopening has also been provided.

48. Businesses have been provided with downloadable posters for and advice on changes to test and trace requirements, plus how to deal with cases and outbreaks among employees. These have been produced with public health and public protection, and has been widely and regularly publicised in media releases, on social media and in our weekly e-newsletter to more than 4,500 businesses.

Excess deaths

49. From the early onset of the pandemic Wiltshire Council proactively sought to ensure that we had enough capacity for the deceased across Wiltshire, in line with our recently updated plan for Excess Deaths. This process, although led by Wiltshire Council, was undertaken in partnership with Swindon Borough Council as this was seen as the most effective and efficient way to look after those who sadly passed away in our area. Alongside both councils, Wiltshire Police and the NHS (acute trusts) were key parts of this process, with a partnership approach pivotal in the whole process.

50. This detailed piece of work resulted in two temporary mortuary facilities established, one in Great Western Hospital and one in Salisbury District Hospital. These two facilities at one point had the capacity to hold over 1,300 deceased with later iterations settling with the joint capacity of 380 across both sites. These sites were in active use between December 2020 – April 2021, holding over 80 deceased at one time during this period.
51. The complex nature of responding to COVID-19 meant that not only did we need to provide a range of secure storage facilities, we were also required to provide welfare units, changing facilities, vehicle transport and staffing. Wiltshire Council staff were asked to volunteer to assist with these facilities with a small team of around 10 staff volunteers being trained in body transport and being utilised regularly through the operational period.
52. In addition to the facilities the Excess Deaths Cell also contacted over 40 Funeral Directors, over 50 Parish Councils and 4 Crematoriums every week to collect data to assist with Government information requests but also to ensure oversight of the operation of the whole system. This data collection and monitoring has been held up by MHCLG as an excellent example of good practice, with Wiltshire regularly returning the most comprehensive data within the region.
53. Moving forward the temporary mortuaries will be reduced in size as the contracts on resources come to an end but a capability will be retained in some form to ensure that we are ready should there be any increase in excess death rates in future.

Homelessness

54. Rough sleeping – so far 106 rough sleepers have been permanently accommodated since the start of the pandemic, some of which have had a history of entrenched rough sleeping. All rough sleepers have been offered accommodation, 16 are currently accommodated in temporary accommodation and 12 are on the street as they have refused the accommodation offer or have been asked to leave accommodation due to their behaviour. The Council has recently been successful in a bid for £ 547k to enhance the service to rough sleepers and this complements the £309,000 which has already been received in 2020/21 which funded the Rough Sleeping team of 8 staff as well as our 8 bed homeless project at The Haven. The four properties purchased with Next steps funding are ready to let and should be occupied by the time this report is considered.
55. General needs homeless remains below pre-pandemic levels . There are 70 homeless households in the Council's temporary accommodation. The main reason for homelessness over the pandemic period was relationship breakdown and being asked to leave by friends and family. The ban on evictions will be lifted from the 31/5/2021 and notice periods reduced from 6 to four months from 1st June which will be again reviewed in October. As this was one of the main reasons for households becoming homeless pre-pandemic there is a risk that this will lead to an increase in homeless presentations.
56. Homes 4 Wilts continues to experience a significant increased demand for affordable housing with a 52% increase compared to the position pre-pandemic. Although extra resources have been brought to bear on this increased work load there still exists a six week back log of housing application assessments. Over the pandemic period there were 1305

affordable homes let which was a 31% decrease from the year prior to the pandemic and this too will have impacted on the current number of households on the housing register of 4233 from 3562 in 19/20.

Organisational Recovery

57. The Organisational Recovery Programme continues to make good progress on council wide internal transformation activities. One of the main priorities for the programme is preparation for a managed return to workplaces when it is safe to do so and communication and engagement with staff in this process. An overview of work recently completed through the workstreams and a summary of future priorities are in **Appendix 1**.

Financial Implications

58. The financial year 2020/21 was like no other, with numerous funding streams being provided by Government to support Wiltshire businesses, residents and Communities as well as providing emergency funding to ensure the Council continued to provide services.

59. Grants received need to be accounted for to ensure compliance with any specific grant conditions as well as reporting requirements back to Central Government. In addition, the Council has been reporting back monthly to Central Government on the financial impact of the pandemic across the whole range of the Councils finances e.g. additional costs, lost income and changes in plans.

60. This has brought a significant level of complexity to the Councils finances, and the provisional outturn for 2020/21, reported to Cabinet as a separate item on the agenda, provides transparency and details on the financial position for the year.

61. An allocation of Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) was made during the pre-election period in April, following consultation with the Leader and directors, as set out in the decision report [online](#). A return to DHSC on the allocation of this funding was required to be made by Easter Monday to ensure the Council was included in the allocations of the £400m national funding for 2021/22. It has now been confirmed that Wiltshire will receive a further £2.807m for COMF in 2021/22.

Legal Implications

62. The Council's legal team continues to provide advice on the application of new COVID-19 legislation and all aspects of recovery.

63. In the absence of any legislation enabling remote council meetings a [briefing note](#) to councillors on appropriate covid-secure arrangements for these meetings was issued. Full council was held on 18 May in the Civic Centre Trowbridge, live streamed to the internet with social distancing and other measures in place. MHCLG have committed to exploring a longer term solution for remote meetings to empower councils to make their own arrangements on this as necessary.

Safeguarding Implications

64. Children's safeguarding services have continued to be delivered in line with practice standards and statutory guidance. Face to face visiting to children has continued unless otherwise indicated by risk assessment. Our key performance indicators remain strong and compare favourably to regional and national averages.
65. As previously reported the Safeguarding Vulnerable People's Partnership, at our request, completed a COVID-19 Safeguarding Review. Through this, individual agencies reviewed their practice during the COVID-19 period to identify good practice and areas where they, or the partnership, could strengthen safeguarding practice. Coinciding with the review our Children's MASH saw an increase in contacts, this increase has been maintained and is reversing the trend seen earlier in the pandemic when there were a lower number of contacts made. The number of families and children referred in for support is now above the range that we would ordinarily expect and we are beginning to see an increase in the number of children at CIN and CP threshold and anticipate a rise in the number of children looked after.
66. As reported in March we continue to develop a range of additional supports for families and children, including the Light House Project (a new initiative in partnership with Oxford Health to deliver an intensive intervention program where long-term neglect is a concern) and the NSPCC Let the Light In Project (a bid to pilot a new intervention for children who have been sexually abused). Despite coinciding with the pandemic, year one of our Fostering Excellence programme has been a success and as a result we have an additional 20 foster carers available to care for Wiltshire Children. Work is ongoing with the CCG and other health partners to ensure mental health services are able to respond effectively to latent demand and increased acuity.
67. The Wiltshire Health Based Place of Safety at Green Lane Hospital continues to accommodate service users from BANES as well as Wiltshire and Swindon as agreed at the start of the pandemic to reduce pressure across the wider police, mental health and social care system. This has had a positive impact on service users across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire.
68. Both Mental Health and Learning Disability social care departments continue to report significant pressure on services due to the complex nature of people's presentations. This is closely monitored through the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire MH and LD recovery and restoration group as well as the Wiltshire MH/LD group.
69. While overall crime levels dropped by 16.5% in Wiltshire last year to the lowest level in the country (compared to a national decrease of 7.8%), domestic abuse-related crimes rose by 10 per cent, with a spike during the summer after the first lockdown ended. Wiltshire Council continues to work closely with Wiltshire Police and other partners to ensure appropriate support is provided to victims of domestic abuse, including safe accommodation services.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

70. This report will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 25 May 2021, with members of the Executive and senior

officers in attendance to answer members' questions.

Procurement Implications

71. A sequential approach to supplier relief was agreed earlier on in the response phase of the pandemic, ensuring that suppliers were pointed to central Government support where possible first and work with us on an open book basis when necessary. The Council has established an internal Commercial Board to provide oversight and assurance on the end to end procurement process around future contract activity and management.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

72. Work continues to understand the impact of the pandemic on those with protected characteristics. Equality implications are being considered in the Council's decision making and any change to service provision.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

73. An update on the council's response to the climate emergency was included on the February Council agenda. It sets out all the council's activity to tackle the climate emergency which has been undertaken in the context of the Covid-19 response and recovery and includes a climate strategy discussion document for comment. Responses from stakeholders so far indicate that they wish to retain some of the benefits of remote meetings which have occurred as a result of the pandemic to minimise travel. Delivery of the council's retrofit programme for council homes and buildings will support green jobs and a green economic recovery.

Risks that may arise as a result of a decision

74. Risks created by responding to COVID-19 are managed by Corporate Leadership Team and Extended Leadership Team as part of the overall management process. No decision required, so no risks arising.

Workforce Implications

75. Government guidance about employment matters affected by the pandemic continues to be applied. The COVID-19 policy implemented in March 2020 sets out information for staff, including the application of policies and procedures to support response and during recovery, and will continue to be reviewed and updated following consultation with the trade unions.

Conclusions

76. Wiltshire Council continues to play a critical role with its partners and the local community in responding to the impact of COVID-19 in the county.

Terence Herbert, Chief Executive

Report Author: David Bowater
21 May 2021

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Additional detail on work under Organisation Recovery.

Appendix 1

Organisational Recovery

1. The Organisational Recovery Programme provides oversight, through 7 workstreams, of activities related to council wide internal transformation. It ensures that all improvement activity is reviewed against a set of principles to promote a joined-up approach, aligned to Our Identity and delivery of the council's business plan.
2. Good progress continues to be made across all workstreams despite a reduction in capacity to support and facilitate on-going redeployment activity and the preparation for and delivery of the elections and councillor induction.
3. A major focus of the programme since March has been the preparation for the return to workplaces and the launch of pilots of new workspaces (hybrid meeting rooms, collaboration spaces and bookable desks) within the main hubs. The pilots went live on 17 May and a "return to workplaces" webinar held on 19 May was attended by nearly 800 staff.
4. The priorities for this workstream going forward are to evaluate the pilots and work with services to design future workplace layouts in hubs and to safely extend access to buildings in line with the government roadmap and public health advice.
5. Communication and engagement with staff will continue during this period with further webinars planned that will enable staff to receive updates on the progress and ask questions.
6. Major milestones within other workstreams since March include:
 - Customer experience workstream - the award of contracts to support with digital payments compliance and automation
 - Inclusion workstream - the re-establishment of the EDI steering group and the roll out of new inclusion training for senior managers, and launch of reverse mentoring scheme pilot
 - High performing culture workstream
 - Our Identity survey has been completed and feedback is being used to identify priority actions
 - Business Intelligence – two use cases have been developed and a community of practice is well established and identifying further opportunities
 - Evolve (SAP replacement) – tender evaluations are currently taking place
 - Wellbeing and Engagement workstream – a third engagement & wellbeing survey has now been launched.
7. Programme priorities for the coming months include:

Customer Experience workstream:

- Completing the Civica upgrade for digital payments
- Next phase of process automation to commence
- Scoping use of text/SMS notifications to customers across a number of services

Inclusion workstream

- Extension of Early Resolution pilot, and review of current grievance policy
- Evaluation of reverse mentoring scheme pilot

Agile workstream:

- Embedding learning from redeployment activity during pandemic into launch of an agile workforce pool
- Review of unsocial, standby and callout policies to support new operating models
- Kickstart placements to be advertised and recruited
- Digital skill gap analysis to be completed

Workplaces and workspaces workstream (in addition to the priorities outlined above related to return of staff to workplaces):

- Phase 3 of MS Teams telephony roll out and decommissioning of mitel phones
- Sharepoint migration continues

High Performing Culture workstream:

- Extension of 360 appraisals to senior leaders
- Development of a performance dashboard
- Launch of an updated leadership and management programme
- Business intelligence - extension of Use Case portfolio
- Evolve – benefits realisation work, award of tender and preparations for implementation to begin

Wellbeing and Engagement workstream:

- Analysis of engagement & wellbeing survey results to identify themes and actions
- Refresh of the Wellbeing Strategy
- Support for staff returning to workplaces

Commercial workstream:

- Skills analysis and development of training
- Completion of process mapping and improvement work