

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

3 June 2020

Wiltshire COVID-19 Response Task Group:

Update on the meeting held on 2 June 2020

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the meeting of the Wiltshire COVID-19 Response Task Group held on 2 June 2020.

Recent activity

2. On 2 June 2020, the task group met to consider the second report to Cabinet on the COVID-19 situation and response. This will be considered by Cabinet on 9 June 2020. The report can be viewed here:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s177174/COVID-19%20and%20Financial%20Update.pdf>

3. Members were joined by the guests below:

Cllr Philip Whitehead	Leader of the Council
Cllr Richard Clewer	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism, Housing and MCI
Alistair Cunningham MBE	Chief Executive Officer (Place)
Terence Herbert	Chief Executive Officer (People)
Kate Blackburn	Interim Director for Public Health
Andy Brown	Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer
Allison Elliot	Director for Adult Social Care
Ian Gibbons	Director for Legal, Electoral and Registration Services and Monitoring Officer
Jo Pitt	Director for HR and Organisational Design
Henry Powell	Scrutiny Lead

4. The task group asked questions on the report to Cabinet, including the following topics:

- a) Preparations and modelling underway for any second wave of covid-19 infections: Every local authority must have an Outbreak Control Management Plan by the end of June. It will be local authorities' responsibility to manage outbreaks so that when the 'R' figure rises they can act to bring the infection under control. There will be members' briefing on Wiltshire's plan shortly.
- b) The financial resilience of care homes: The council risk assesses care homes daily in terms of capacity, infection control and financial sustainability. Some care homes are facing significant challenges, for example, where high numbers of covid-19 cases has led to low occupancy rates. We are reasonably confident that most care homes in Wiltshire are part of much larger groups, which may protect them to an extent. But officers are risk assessing these larger groups too and, where there are concerns, we are working with the CCG to ensure we can respond to protect residents if necessary.
- c) Emergency bed provision: At the beginning of the pandemic we procured care home bed capacity for those who tested positive. We will retain these in preparation for a potential second wave of infections. By the end of this week we hope to clarify where new discharge-to-assess beds (funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) will be.
- d) How the council is ensuring that supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are maintained: Detailed records of PPE requests and usage are kept, and care homes are asked to use their usual suppliers where possible. Demand on council supplies of PPE is now reducing.
- e) Officers are considering the latent health demands as well as the skills impact of delays to children's education across the county. The council will need to work collaboratively with partners and share resources to address these challenges.
- f) The potential for volunteer numbers to decrease as more residents return to work: This will be covered in the Recovery Plan which is being formulated by the Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) under the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Officers are working with parish councils and volunteer groups to ascertain the longer-term support needs across the county. The Wiltshire Wellbeing Hub is receiving fewer requests for support as we move out of lockdown. The focus will need to remain on the most vulnerable as we move forward. Despite requests, the council does not have access to the NHS pool of volunteers. However, the council is still operating within the Care Act for adult social care (i.e. it is not using the easements permitted under the emergency Covid-19 legislation).
- g) How residents are being supported and encouraged to continue social distancing: Council communications with all sections of the population about maintaining social distancing will be critical in reducing infection

and encouraging a safe return to shopping etc. The council's safe-spacing work to support this continues.

- h) The increased demand for school transport due to social distancing requirements: In some cases the council can deliver expanded provision, and in others it may be challenging due to the significant changes required i.e. potentially doubling school coach provision in a large rural area.
- i) The circumstances that would cause the Section 151 officer to serve a Section 114 notice to council: There are no plans to issue the notice and clarity on the further funding from central government is still awaited. Nationally, Finance directors are in contact regarding local authorities' situation and locally the officer and political leadership are coordinating to lobby government.

Proposal

- 5. To note the update on the meeting of the Wiltshire COVID-19 Response Task Group held on 2 June 2020.
- 6. To note that the task group will meet again on 8 July 2020 to discuss the latest report to Cabinet on the COVID-19 situation and response, with a report being brought to OS Management Committee on 9 July.

Report author: Henry Powell, Scrutiny Lead, 01225 718052,
henry.powell@wiltshire.gov.uk