

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

5 January 2021

Subject: COVID-19 Update

Cabinet Member: Cllr Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Military Civilian Integration and Communications

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 December. Since the last report a national lockdown has been replaced by a tier system with Wiltshire placed into Tier Two (high). Work has been undertaken to develop a local tracing service and support for businesses, vulnerable groups, care homes and schools continues. Mass vaccination programmes started week commencing 7 December, and local vaccination centres began to open 16 December in Wiltshire. Shadow recovery work continues.

Proposal(s)

Cabinet are asked to

- Continue to encourage all residents to download the NHS Test and Trace app on their phone.
- 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
- To note the financial forecast as detailed within the report
- To note changes in national policy and the work underway within the Recovery Coordinating Group themes.

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. A brief summary of the key activity to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet in December.

Background

2. As of Sunday 19 December 2020, 1,743,893 people in England had tested positive for COVID-19. Further information is available [online](#). The [ONS](#) suggest that as of 4 December there were 68,939 registered COVID-19 deaths across England and Wales of which 65,061 were in England. As of 18 December in Wiltshire there have now been 6232 people who have tested positive for COVID-19. As of 18 December the rate of cases per 100,000 in Wiltshire in the last 7 days was 78 which is below the national average. Up to the 4 December, 428 registered deaths involving COVID-19 in all settings in Wiltshire had occurred (223 in care homes, 178 in hospital, 23 at home and 4 in hospices). Further information on weekly mortality is available from [ONS](#).

Main Considerations for the Council

3. On 23 November the Prime Minister set out the [COVID-19 Winter Plan](#). Within this measures were confirmed which will be monitored in relation to which tier an area is placed under. These measures include case detection rates in all age groups, case detection rates in the over 60s, the rate at which cases are rising or falling, positivity rate (the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of test taken), and pressure on the NHS both currently and projected.
4. The Prime Minister announced on 26 November that a return to a [tier alert system](#) would commence 2 December.
5. Wiltshire was placed in tier 2 (high tier) as during that time rates within Wiltshire were increasing and pressures were being felt within the acute hospitals. The tiers were reviewed again on 16 December 2020 and Wiltshire remained in tier 2.
6. On 17 December the government announced that the furlough scheme has been extended another month until the end of April 2021.

7. On 19 December the government announced a [revised tier structure](#) consisting of 4 tiers and parts of the country were placed into tier 4. This was due to concerns over the variation of COVID-19 and increasing numbers of positive cases. Wiltshire remained in tier 2.
8. Additional key government announcements published since the cabinet paper are in **Appendix 2**.
9. Wiltshire Council has continued in response mode for the COVID-19 pandemic. Internal Gold response group continues to meet which feeds into weekly multi-agency response groups SSG (strategic Coordination Group) and the TCG (Tactical Coordination Group).
10. The Wiltshire Wellbeing Hub continues to offer support, guidance and signposting and proactively contacted all those recently recorded as being clinically extremely vulnerable.
11. There has been a 13.5% increase of pupils eligible for free school meals in October 2020 compared to January 2020. This equates to 1055 extra pupils.
12. The COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme is now live. Wiltshire has received a grant of £1.1m to support families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals most in need with the cost of food, energy and water bills. The scheme runs from December until 31 March 2021. Payments have already been made to 9,133 eligible children via 239 schools to the value of £274,440 and to 1217 eligible pre-school children via 236 early years settings to the value of £36,190. Further payments will be made to this group in January and March.
13. We have awarded further grants to the value of £69,454 to Wiltshire Community Foundation – ‘Surviving Winter Scheme’ and the Centre for Sustainable Energy who support vulnerable adults with fuel payments through winter. A proportion of the grant will be held within the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme which will accept applications from individuals and families.
14. To support local retailers and small businesses during the COVID-19 crisis we have put together a Shop Local, Support Wiltshire directory. Sorted by place, shoppers can find the businesses close to them, many offering the option to buy online or click and collect. <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/shop-local-wiltshire>.
15. We are on track to deliver approximately £100m of COVID-19 grants to over 10,000 businesses across Wiltshire in 2020.
16. As we moved back out from the national lockdown into the tier system, libraries and leisure centre have been re-opened.
17. A second public COVID-19 webinar was held on 8 December which again was well received. Residents have requested further webinars to be held.
18. Planning for Wiltshire’s long term recovery upon exiting lockdown continues, with our recovery work still running in shadow. Significant developments since the

last report are summarised under the sub-headings below; with additional detail in **Appendix 1**.

Test and Trace

19. The local tracing service has been live since Mid-November, picking up any cases that NHS Test and Trace have not managed to contact. As a total, 85% of COVID-19 cases in Wiltshire are now followed up by either NHS Test and Trace or our local contact tracing service. In previous months the county's average was around 60-70%, so this is a big improvement.
20. In Wiltshire we have a regional testing site in Salisbury and a local testing site became operational on 1 December based at the previous Trowbridge mobile site. Two further sites have been identified for mobile testing units to maintain coverage across the county. These are in Chippenham and Warminster.

Mass Testing

21. Testing is now being widened to include a host of additional settings and community groups. Within Wiltshire, GP surgeries as well as care homes and schools now have access to swab test kits for those most vulnerable. Care homes are also being provided with a number of test kits (lateral flow tests) for visitors so that there can be closer and more frequent family contact with residents in a secure and safe way.
22. In addition, two pilots will be starting in the New Year using the lateral flow test kits within a business setting and within some of internal council staff who work to support some of our more vulnerable individuals. The results of these pilots will be evaluated to assess the potential for wider roll out.

Mass Vaccination

23. Mass vaccination programmes started week commencing 7 December, and local vaccination centres began to open 16 December in the county using the vaccine from Pfizer. Due to the large logistical nature of the programme the council have been working closely with the NHS, who are leading the roll out, to ensure that resources and support are provided across the Local Resilience Forum.

Outbreak Management

24. There has been a continued increase in case notifications to the public health team across a variety of settings, requiring outbreak management and monitoring. New assets to assist schools and businesses prepare for and deal with cases and outbreaks have been designed and distributed locally and surge capacity has been identified from the public health team for an anticipated increase in outbreak notification in the New Year.

Community spaces and engagement

25. As we moved back out from the national lockdown into the tier system, libraries and leisure centre were re-opened. 16 libraries have reverted back to browsing along with bookable computer access ensuring residents without internet or computers are able to get online. 5 libraries continue to offer order and collect and will move to browsing in the new year. Other smaller libraries will follow suit in the New Year. Netheravon Library re-opened for the first time since lockdown on 14 December as a purely volunteer-led and run library.
26. The library service is working to expand opening hours so that libraries are open until 6pm at least once per week and open on a Saturday.
27. All ten in-house leisure centres have re-opened including the new Calne Community Campus and Amesbury Sports Centres for the first time and nine of the ten Places Leisure managed leisure centres are open. Trowbridge Sports Centre will open in the New Year following the structural repairs.
28. The number of community groups increased over the second lockdown to 343. The support required was significantly less during November, however, volunteers again stepped up wherever they were required. We continue to offer guidance and are working with partners and the groups to build up the resilience of these groups. The Wiltshire Together platform is building strongly to provide a more comprehensive picture of community activities, services, community officers and partners.
29. The success of the Wiltshire Together Champions programme now continues, working with voluntary organisations and officers from the Communities and Public Health team to provide a friendly face and to maintain compliance with the current COVID-19 measures.

Wellbeing Hub

30. The Wellbeing hub stood up during the first lockdown period and its objective is to implement a county wide initiative offering support, guidance and signposting to the local population. It was stood back up in November 2020 for the second response phase and initially ran over 7 days a week. The hub will be in operation 5 days a week during the Christmas period to ensure those in need are assisted during this difficult time, with emergency duty service available for any emergencies at weekends and bank holidays. Contacts into the hub significantly dropped during Mid- December and therefore, we have reviewed the hub opening hours and it now operates over 5 days, with support available from the Council's Emergency Duty Service (EDS) to provide an emergency response if required over the weekend.
31. All shielding residents were contacted during the first lockdown. 3,100 people who have been recently identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable since the second lockdown in November 2020 have also been contacted.
32. The hub continues 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.

33. The Wellbeing hub fortnightly multiagency/partner meetings have been re-established to ensure a multiagency responsive system is in place.

Care Homes

34. The Council continues to work in partnership with Wiltshire Care Partnership, the CCG and CQC in implementing a support programme to Care Homes. This has included the dedicated COVID-19 team, regular webinars and newsletters, and a BSW CCG Care Home Oversight Group chaired by the Director of Nursing & Quality.

35. As of 15 December there were 16 care homes reporting new COVID-19 positive cases, a figure that has been stable for the last 3 weeks. There was a total of 51 cases, mainly due to a cluster of cases in 2 homes. There are more cases amongst staff (33) than residents (18). This is the lowest number of cases amongst residents for 4 weeks.

36. Multiple cases in a single setting continues to be a rare occurrence, although has increased, showing how infection control measures supported by regular testing continue to be effective measures preventing widespread transmission in most settings.

37. Since mid-April, the Council has worked in partnership with the CCG and CQC to weekly review risks and support all local care homes.

38. The Health Protection Board reviews outbreaks in care homes fortnightly and considers whether there should be any restrictions to visiting. The Council is encouraging care homes to allow visiting but have advised them to review their risk assessments and ensure that infection prevention and control measures, including social distancing, are in place to ensure COVID-19 safe visiting.

39. This advice continues with the lateral flow tests that have been introduced for care home visitors due to the reliability of such tests on asymptomatic people. These tests will be another way that care homes can strengthen safe visiting but do not signal a relaxation of the measures in place. A letter from the Directors of Public Health and Adult Social Services of BaNES, Wiltshire and Swindon have been sent to care homes to emphasise this message.

40. The Council is working closely with the CCG to prepare for the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccinations.

Health and Care

41. The multi-agency approach we are taking is enabling us to support individuals to return home as quickly as possible. We have identified and implemented additional capacity for people with complex needs so that there is an opportunity to make longer term plans away from a hospital ward. Planning is also taking place to deliver a new service in partnership with our Community Health partners to help people to remain at home and avoid a hospital admission wherever possible and we are aiming to have an impact this winter.

42. The Care Home Advisory group that we established early into the first lockdown to provide expert advice to care providers continues to meet regularly and has addressed a range of issues including testing and infection control measures which has been welcomed by our providers.
43. Our current PPE supply continues to meet the demands of the business across Wiltshire. In addition, both Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire & Swindon Local Resilience Forum (LRF) as a whole, have sufficient stock across lead PPE items. In relation to Wiltshire Council daily monitoring of stock levels, usage rates and estimated days of supply are carried out alongside fortnightly monitoring of stock levels against usage rates seen in April/May, at their highest.
44. Wiltshire Council also carries out the same fortnightly monitoring for Swindon Borough Council in order that the LRF status is known and reported. These reports identify Wiltshire Council having approx. 3 months' supply across lead PPE items and the LRF having approx. 8 months' supply.
45. Department of Health and Social Care continues to provide monthly PPE supplies to assist with demand across certain settings, should the need arise, to those who are ineligible to register on the Govt PPE portal. These services include children's and adults social care, rough sleepers' team, CCG staff and Direct Payment employees and with education and childcare settings recently being included.
46. Discussions with DHSC have taken place as to whether these monthly supplies will also include PPE demands to assist funeral directors within the geographical area. This has yet to be decided.
47. Monthly reviews continue with procurement to ensure commercial suppliers have adequate stocks/lead times with discussions regarding post Brexit.
48. A Wiltshire Council representative attends the Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) updating the meeting with the current PPE status relating to the LRF as a whole. Assistance from the TCG would be provided if needed.

Education

49. Attendance continues to be monitored and schools continue to be supported to achieve full attendance. The weekly attendance data survey of early years providers indicates that of the 95% of settings that respond, 90% are open. Attendance across all schools was 91% on the 9 December 2020, this remains above the national level of 86% on the 3 December 2020.
50. There is sufficient childcare provision currently, although there are concerns about the sustainability for a small number of settings. A hardship fund is open for settings that have fewer children this year and who need additional help to maintain viability.
51. There was a total of 113 positive cases across 46 school settings in Wiltshire as of 9 December 2020. A total of 3036 pupils were self-isolating. Early years settings have been increasingly affected by infections with 12% having had a positive case in either staff or a child.

52. On the last day of term in December the government announced that secondary schools would have a staggered return for pupils, with exam years returning first and mass testing of pupils being made available on a weekly basis. The Council has been working closely with schools to support them and to clarify the guidance and the staffing requirements for the tests.
53. There have been 13 Ofsted visits to Wiltshire primary schools during term 2, all of which have been conducted remotely. The outcomes of these are ungraded and have been published in the forms of letters sent to the school community following the visit. They have visited:
- 1 school judged 'outstanding'
 - 6 schools judged 'good'
 - 1 school judged 'requires improvement'
 - 4 schools judged 'inadequate'
54. Continued guidance for schools for remote learning has been given through the Headteachers' briefing and through disadvantaged learner networks from the EdTech Demonstrator Hub, signposting schools to resources, training webinars and school to school support to improve remote learning. All schools have in place remote learning plans which can be enacted for individuals, bubbles, year groups and a whole school. The DFE have updated their expectations for remote education with a minimum set of expectations. This sets out expectations for curriculum coverage and sequencing, quality and minimum equivalent lengths of teaching time for primary and secondary students.
55. With the removal of national restrictions on the 2 December back to a tiered system, additional guidance was published for [schools](#). The changes have been shared with schools via the weekly newsletter and webinars. Schools have adjusted risk assessments and arrangements to implement the guidance.
56. Details to changes to examinations for summer 2021 and for primary assessments have been outlined and shared with schools; further support and guidance will be developed during terms 3 and 4.
57. The 'Well-being for Education Resilience' has been adapted for the local Wiltshire context by a multi-agency collective to ensure it complements existing initiatives (e.g. Five to Thrive training programme). It provides an opportunity to provide immediate support for education settings in managing the emotional health and wellbeing of their communities during the pandemic, and to take a more co-ordinated approach longer term, clearly promoting and signposting people to local support. There has been positive engagement from primary and secondary schools. A multi-agency directory of services and programmes that support children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health that went live in November continues to be promoted to schools.
58. Extensive [guidance](#) has been revised and updated following the most recent government guidance introduced to coincide with the resumption of the tier system on 2 December relating to home to school transport. There continues to be no requirement for social distancing on home to school transport, but secondary age pupils on dedicated home to school transport are now required to wear face coverings, unless they are medically exempt. This brings dedicated

school transport into line with public transport. Letters were sent to all affected pupils, to schools and contractors advising them of this change, while exemption cards were sent to schools and notices for display on vehicles were sent to contractors. Wiltshire Council continues to stress the importance of:

- Additional cleaning of vehicles with particular attention being paid to frequently touched areas such as door handles, bells pushes, arm rest etc
- Good vehicle ventilation being maintained at all times

59. All taxi drivers and Passenger Assistants are required to wear a face covering.

60. Free school meal funding has been provided direct to schools and early years settings to ensure all eligible pupils receive two £15 vouchers to cover the two-week Christmas period. This funding is going to all pupils in receipt of free school meals, 2-year-old 'Better Together' funding or early years pupil premium. Education settings have had flexibility to use a variety of methods to provide this support for their families and these have reflected the local area and family circumstances.

Economy

61. In November the claimant rate was 11,895, levelling off from August's 12,850. Wiltshire's claimant rate remains at 4%, compared to a Great Britain rate of 6.3% and a South West rate of 5%.

62. Of the 11,895 claimants, 2465 are under the age of 24 which is a fall of 100 in the past month. For the first time since the initial claimant spike, the number of unemployed has risen in the aged 50+ category, but only by a small margin.

63. Data from Citizen's Advice shows there has been an increase in Universal Credit (UC) claims in November of 389 individuals. This follows a fall last month of -244, and November is showing the highest claimant rate this year.

64. There has been a further decrease in furlough claims through September as national restrictions were eased. We are yet to see the impact of the November restrictions.

65. At the end of September people were furloughed in Wiltshire, a rate of 6%. Wiltshire continues to have a lower furlough rate than the national average (now 8%).

66. A second round of the self-employment grant has generated a rise in the number of claims nationally. Wiltshire's claim rate continues to be lower than the national and regional average. However, Wiltshire businesses have higher value claims, consistently £200.00 higher than the national average across the months. The data identifies 25,300 eligible businesses in Wiltshire.

67. As of 17 December we have received 581 applications for the Self Isolation Payment Scheme (SIPS) and have awarded 167 payments. Payments are £500 and are to support those in financial need as a result of being required to self-isolate. A team is in place to administer this payment scheme.

68. The Kickstart Programme provides apprenticeship support to 16-24 year olds who are not currently in employment or training. We have coordinated a multi-agency approach to the Kickstart Programme, with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership taking the lead on this via the Growth Hub. We have 270 placements lined up across Wiltshire. Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) are now allocating young people to these placements. There has been a delay in rolling out the scheme within the DWP but the scheme will now be implemented early in 2021.
69. The Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) has supported businesses who have had to close during the most recent four week lockdown. As of 17 December we have made £3.176m of payments under this scheme and £483k has been paid using the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), which is aimed to support businesses who aren't eligible for the main LRSG funding. These grant payments have supported 2394 Wiltshire businesses. We are on track to deliver approximately £100m of COVID-19 grants to over 10,000 businesses across Wiltshire in 2020.
70. The council has submitted a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to fund energy efficiency improvements in council buildings. A total of £4.7m has been requested, which will stimulate local supply chains and sustain green jobs locally.
71. The council has also submitted a £0.5m bid to the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme. This will fund energy efficiency improvements in 2021 for 100 of our council homes that are rated D-F on their Energy Performance Certificates.
72. The council has been talking to training providers about local provision of green skills to prepare for the opportunities presented by the energy transition.

Safe Spaces

73. We continue to work closely with our partners in town councils to evaluate the effectiveness of social distancing schemes and have a clear structure in place with weekly meetings overseeing all schemes for creating safe space for walking and cycling particularly in busy areas.
74. The Council is consulting on all cycling schemes funded from government's Emergency Active Travel, and the consultation will end on 8 January.
75. Following recent guidance from government we have considered our preparedness for severe winter weather, reduced roadworks during seasonal holidays to improve traffic flow, and considered social distancing at busy transport hubs.

Organisational Recovery

76. The organisational recovery programme continues, albeit progress has been impacted by the diversion of some of the programme resources to support the ongoing response to the pandemic. Despite this some initiatives will continue to

be implemented as planned and further details will be provided in the next Covid19 update to Cabinet in February.

Financial Implications

77. This report provides an update on the Councils financial position as at the end of period 8, projecting the forecast position as at 30 November 2020, detailing any significant changes in the variances since the period 7 position and updating on any announcements from Government.
78. At the Cabinet meeting on 1 December the COVID-19 Update and Financial Update report presented a forecast small underspend of £0.071m, a continuing improvement on the previous forecast position. In addition, £4m was set aside in a specific earmarked reserve to deal with the challenges of setting a balanced budget for the financial year 2021/22 as approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 November.
79. Since the last budget monitoring report there have not been additional funding announcements to support any additional impact for the current financial year (2020/21). Specific grants continue to be assumed to be fully spent to support the activity for which they have been awarded or ring-fenced for these purposes and therefore do not impact on the overall financial forecasts for the council.
80. Overall Place services have a revised forecast variance improvement of £1.291m from period 7 and is due to income forecasts in Car Parking, Planning, Building Control and Land Charges showing an improvement in actual income received in comparison to the previous forecast. Transport forecasts have improved as confirmation that government grant will continue to the end of the financial year and not end in January as originally expected.
81. In other service areas there are further significant positive changes to forecast variances. The forecast total spend has reduced by £2.197m thus improving the overall position.
82. Families and Children's are forecasting a favourable movement of £0.475m largely due to lower than expected caseloads as a result of lockdown activity during the financial year which have meant vacancies have not been filled by agency social workers as would normally be the case and higher level of income to support asylum seeking children.
83. There has been an adverse movement in Access & Reablement of £0.613m from period 7 to period 8. There is a result of an increase in commitments in Access & Reablement as the Hospital Discharge Funding is phased out, and people become eligible for local authority funded support. There is also an increase in staffing costs. This is offset by a reduction in the anticipated risk of new packages that were built into the previous forecasts.
84. There is a favourable movement on Adults Commissioning of £0.603m from period 7 to period 8. Two block contracts with Order of Saint John have ended, contributing to £0.400m of the movement. There has also been an agreement to fund work undertaken by Age Concern, previously funded from the

commissioning budget, from a mixture of the Hospital Discharge funding and the improved Better Care Fund.

85. The forecast for Housing Benefit Subsidy has improved, with greater confidence in the ability to recover overpayments and results in a £0.500m favourable variance.
86. The net position of the favourable movement in the forecast of the income losses and the additional movements in forecast service spend results in an overall forecast underspend for the council of £2.892m.
87. Given the continued improvement in the overall forecast position, there is now the opportunity to put further monies aside to deal with anticipated issues arising in the 2021/22 financial year. Not only will this be utilised to assist in balancing the 2021/22 budget, but monies will also be set aside to deal with latent demand originally forecast to be incurred this year, but now expected to arise in the next financial year.
88. Areas of latent demand being considered are around Mental Health services, Children in Care, SEND Transport and maintenance of Council buildings. To ensure funding is available to support the anticipated delayed expenditure in future years these balances will be requested to be transferred into an earmarked reserve to manage latent demand.
89. This will be fully reported and detailed out in the quarter 3 position when there is further clarity on the forecast financial position for this financial year as well as understanding the position with respect to latent demand and in which year that pressure and risk may fall on services.
90. Any additional underspend at the end of the year will be transferred to the General Fund Reserve which currently stands at £15.456m. Conversely any overspend that may arise at the financial year end will be required to be funded by this reserve.
91. Given the uncertainty as we move into the winter months and the uncertainty of further response and recovery costs during this period the spending control measures will still continue until the situation becomes clearer and to ensure we continue to protect the General Fund Reserve and where possible continue to bolster earmarked reserves for future resilience.

Legal Implications

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

Safeguarding Implications

93. Adult and Children's social care continue to maintain all statutory requirements.
94. Referrals into children's safeguarding services are now above pre-COVID-19 levels and we forecast this growth to continue to increase at least until the end of the financial year. However, as a result of lower demand from March through

to the summer the number of children subject to child protection plans or looked after is lower than forecasted; this pattern is similar in many local authorities and has recently been recognised by both Ofsted and the DfE, with national publicity campaigns commenced.

95. The Safeguarding Vulnerable People's Partnership in Wiltshire is leading a campaign to ensure all agencies and services review their current practice to maintain good oversight of vulnerable children and know when to refer concerns to social care. We continue to anticipate growth in the numbers of children subject to child protection plans and looked after children, however it is unlikely that this growth will now peak before the end of this financial year.
96. Planning continues to ensure statutory social care demand can be met and demand modelling draws data and intelligence from a wide range of providers and partner organisations to enable a system wide response. Regular sit-reps are obtained from across the safeguarding partnership so that demand readiness can be assured.
97. The demand into Adult MASH remains low with a suspected sudden surge in the New Year. This follows the historical trend and considers the latent demand expected around financial abuse, which is expected due to the pandemic. Further work is underway with our Communications team to raise awareness of financial abuse and where to find support.
98. Referrals into Adult Social Care Advice and Contact teams are predicted to follow a similar pattern to safeguarding referrals with a dip in December followed by a rapid increase in January/ February. Further review and analysis are required to identify and understand incoming demand from primary care/acute services and any resultant impact on demand for adult care.
99. The Learning Disability Team is already experiencing a higher than normal level of demand due to the impact that the closure day and respite services have had on individuals and their carers. Demand is expected to remain high with a peak of very high demand over the Christmas period.
100. The demand for both Mental Health Assessments and s136 assessments is expected to remain stable until the new year when both are likely to see a significant increase. It is also expected that there will be some slight increase coming from cases on the edge of admission requiring more intensive mental health support from the local authority – i.e. those who were being sufficiently supported outside of local authority services pre-COVID-19 may find a reduction in that support increases demand for local authority Adult Mental Health service provision.
101. For the sector, demand for support and services for those with lower level needs is likely to rise significantly as the long-term impact of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns are felt (social isolation, winter season, stretched unpaid carer capacity, reductions in community support capacity, etc).
102. Work is underway to understand the recent government announcements for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding being made available (in-year) to support the local authority's response to

domestic abuse and support to victims and their families. In preparedness of the new Domestic Abuse Bill coming into effect in April 2021, plans are now in place having been reviewed through Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnerships as well as the Vulnerable People Stakeholder's group.

103. Lessons learnt in relation to domestic abuse from the previous lockdown are being used by providers of domestic abuse services. Christmas and New Year is usually the time where demand and pressure is highest on domestic abuse services with volumes already higher than normally anticipated, and awareness of helplines and communications is being raised. We will continue to maintain the domestic abuse 24 helpline at least until the end of the financial year.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

104. This report will be considered by the Financial Planning Task Group on 4 January 2021 and Wiltshire COVID-19 Response Task Group on 7 January 2021, with members of the Executive and senior officers in attendance to answer members' questions. The Chairmen will report any comments and findings of the task group at the Cabinet meeting.

Procurement Implications

105. 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

106. 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. Recovery theme leads have embedded the use of a Health Equality Assessment Tool. The Community Resilience theme working with partners is leading on the work to enable Wiltshire's communities to be cohesive places where difference is celebrated.
107. Further information about some of the work undertaken by the Community Resilience theme is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

108. A new Climate Strategy will be developed in the coming year to set out how the council is going to meet its challenging targets to become carbon neutral by 2030. As part of developing the strategy, each Recovery Theme will need to consider the environmental impact of its activities and identify opportunities to contribute to a green recovery.
109. The council has recently joined forces with dozens of local authorities across the country and signed up to the ADEPT blueprint for a green recovery. This

[initiative](#) aims to secure more powers and resources for councils to take action on climate change and nature restoration, and to build back better from COVID-19.

110. The Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group has put forward recommendations on Energy, Transport and Planning which have now all been published. The Executive's response to the Energy and Transport recommendations and the Planning recommendations are available as downloads [here](#).

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

111. A partnership risk register is in place and owned by the Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). Recovery partnership risks are managed in themes on separate registers with an escalation procedure for significant risks to be reviewed by the RCG.
112. Wiltshire Council specific risks around recovery are managed within the Organisational Recovery programme on a separate register. That register will feed into the Council's Strategic Risk Register. Wiltshire Council's Performance and Risk Management reporting will resume for quarter two 2020/21.
113. Internal management of risk during the current response phase has led to the identification of new risks and the creation of a Council-wide risk register managed by Gold CLT.

Workforce Implications

114. 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.
115. The current tiering of regions based on the level of COVID cases has been taken account of and communications to staff to reiterate the need to work at home wherever possible have been issued. In addition, the process for approving staff to return to the workplace has been reviewed to ensure staff are only attending the workplace for essential reasons, i.e. impact on service delivery, to access equipment or information or for well-being reasons, and with approval of Directors.
116. The organisation recovery programme is taking steps to assess, evaluate and review the way in which the workforce operated during lockdown so that we can embed some of the positive changes and identify new opportunities to deliver services differently.

Conclusions

117. Wiltshire Council continues to play a critical role with its partners and the local community in responding to the impact of the coronavirus in the county.

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17 December 2020

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Additional detail on work under themes and on Organisation Recovery
Appendix 2: Key government announcements provided since last cabinet report

Appendix 1

Health and Wellbeing – additional information

Homelessness

- In partnership with Aster Housing, we have allocated a property using the Housing 1st Model . The first review is due in a couple of weeks, but early signs are positive and wrap around support is working well .
- With long-term government funding we have identified properties for use as move on accommodation for rough sleepers. We are hoping that these will be available in the new year.
- The Homes4Wilts housing need figures were 2712 in March 2020 and are now 3071 - an increase of 13%. The reason for the increase will be a combination of increased demand and the fact that less affordable housing has been re-let due to organisations locking down and also a prioritisation of homeless applicants being rehoused during the pandemic for obvious reasons. The additional applications have placed a toll on the Homes4wilts team. Additional resources have been brought in and also colleagues from the housing options and homelessness teams have stepped in to help address the increase. If the supply of affordable housing does not catch up the inevitable consequence will be that households will wait longer before being rehoused. The service manages this through the coordination of various affordable housing supplies primarily to meet homelessness demand. That is through the temporary accommodation supply and increasingly the property provided by Stone Circle Housing company. There is every reason to believe demand will increase significantly in 2021 when Courts start hearing more possession proceedings.
- In partnership with agencies who work with rough sleepers we have completed our annual rough sleepers count which was done in the early hours of the morning at the end of November. Figures are due to be verified shortly by government but are not that different to our September quarterly count .

Anti-social behaviour

- Next steps are being taken with the wider ASB group to define ASB, it's types, their links and differences to then understand applicable and effective responses. The Salisbury City Centre group are keen to resolve issues closer to the root and positively.
- National PHE guidance supports our approach to work in an intensive, person-centred, strengths focused way with clients as equal partners in this process and a blueprint is being developed.

Substance misuse

- We continue to work closely with Motiv8, who support children with substance misuse, on their digital offer.
- Turning Point, who support adults with substance misuse, continue to support those most vulnerable. Their online offer continues to grow as do online workshops.
- Dual diagnosis work is progressing and pathways for both adults and children are close to being finalised.

BSW Mental Health / Learning Disability / Autism

- Bringing partners and localities together to co-design a response to the national community services framework for mental health.
- AWP have undertaken a bed base review which was undertaken with partners and CCG localities.
- The system has restarted the learning disability and autism spectrum condition programme (and the 18-25 pathway)

Care, Safeguarding and Education Theme – additional information

FACT

- The FACT Executive and Operational Boards continue to oversee the delivery of the revised programme structure focussing on the agreed priority projects;
 - Early Support Assessment - implementation plan
 - Inclusive approaches - alternative education provision
 - Young People's Service - multi agency staffing, Contextual Safeguarding and data sharing related to Child Exploitation
 - School Readiness - speech, language and communication in the early years
 - Integrated Working - MH/LD/ASD
 - Transitional Safeguarding - older adolescents and young adults
- The current focus is on ensuring each project has an effective multi-agency project board driving its progress and a clear set of objectives and milestones.
- The FACT Operational Board is planning to hold a workshop session during March/April 2021 to reflect on the impact that COVID-19 has had upon services and service; the outcome of these discussions will inform current and potential future FACT projects.

Community Resilience Theme -additional information

With the move out of national lockdown and into tier 2 the Community Resilience recovery continues to focus work on activities that address inequalities deepened by COVID-19 and on enabling and supporting communities to undertake compliant activity during lockdown to support, in particular, loneliness, isolation, youth provision and mental health.

A youth provision task and finish group is promoting networking across youth organisations in Wiltshire, enabling them to better share learning and information and to connect with statutory services within Wiltshire Council. The group will also review funding from Area Boards to Youth Services and work with those Area Boards where there are opportunities to bridge the gaps in provision in the rural parts of the county.

Further work to understand how inclusive and diverse the sector is will also be undertaken focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on minority groups to help understand if youth provision is picking up on this need and meeting it, or if there a gap that will lead to reduced opportunity for these young people.

Community spaces

The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre has re-opened enabling 26 visits per day.

Active Communities continues to support residents utilising online resources on its website. An active communities advent calendar was released through December via social media.

Wiltshire Community Foundation, Community First and Public Health held a webinar for 66 participants to support community groups with guidance to open community spaces and groups safely.

Community Engagement

A series of recovery workshops, Area Boards, partnership meetings have been delivered during the latter half of 2020. Comprehensive reports will be taken to the Area Boards early in 2021 identifying key priority themes based on data and community feedback.

Regular meetings and partnership working continues with VCS partners, Town and Parish Clerks, Community groups and Faith Leaders.

Recovery community engagement activity across the partnership system has been mapped seeking to enable a joined-up approach to connecting activity.

Inequalities workstream

We are continuing to collate and monitor the data on the impact of COVID-19 on inequality groups in Wiltshire in order to ensure we are able to support our communities to target activity to address emerging issues, and link into other Recovery themes as needed to provide targeted support.

Opportunities to build on our data include the VCS Impact Survey (currently live), a series of targeted, informal engagement sessions with specific groups, and a proposal for an academic research piece on the hidden voices of the pandemic in Wiltshire. The latter comes with a financial cost and options for supporting this are being explored.

The group is assisting BSW CCG Engagement Team with roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine, helping them to engage with marginalised groups who are less likely to come forward, whether because they aren't registered with a GP, have communication or transport barriers, or have lack of understanding or trust in the vaccination process.

Good progress by the "Get Connected" multiagency digital inclusion group: AbilityNet taking over the work previously carried out by Wiltshire Online Digital Champions, working with older people to improve digital skills, another project had delivery of 50 Chromebooks to be distributed to those without equipment. Julian House linked in

with the group to address specific needs of Gypsy, traveller and boater communities with the potential for these groups to benefit from Project Mercury (Army technicians have been renovating old laptops for reuse in the community).

Appendix 2- Key government updates provided since last Cabinet report

- Guidance was issued on 29 November 2020 in relation to [Christmas bubbles](#). This was [revised](#) on 19 December 2020 due to increases of cases.
- Evidence published 30 November 2020 on [the health, economic and social effects of COVID 19 and the tiered approach](#)
- From Monday 14 December the [self isolation period](#) for people identified as being a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 changed from 14 days to 10 days (with the exception of those in certain health and care settings).
- Publication of guidance for the [Christmas Support Payment \(CSP\)](#) for wet-led pubs that have been severely impacted over the Christmas period due to temporary local restrictions
- Announcement on 30 November that retailers will be able to [extend their daily opening hours](#) from Monday to Saturday in the run up to Christmas and through January.