

Report to:	Strategy and Resources Committee	Date:	8 June 2020
Report title:	Update on the Council's Response to COVID-19		
Report from:	Helen Bailey, Chief Executive		
Ward/Areas affected:	Borough-wide		
Chair of Committee/Lead Member:	Councillor Ruth Dombey, Leader of the Council		
Author(s)/Contact Number(s):	Helen Bailey, Chief Executive		
Corporate Plan Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being Active ● Making Informed Choices ● Living Well Independently ● Keeping People Safe 		
Open/Exempt:	Open		
Signed:		Date:	29 May 2020

1. Summary

- 1.1 In this extraordinary public health situation, we remain Ambitious for Sutton. The Council is focused upon:
- Supporting the local NHS to manage the situation;
 - Maintaining those essential services for which we are responsible;
 - Sustaining the services which support the viability of the community;
 - Working with partners to support those who are rendered more vulnerable or newly vulnerable by the situation; and
 - Starting to plan for recovery taking into account government guidance and local priorities.
- 1.2 This report follows on from the update on the Council's Response to the COVID-19 Threat report which was presented to Committee on 30 March, and outlines the enormous efforts the Council has made to ensure existing services (and new) services are delivered to the communities and businesses that need them most during these difficult times.
- 1.3 The report reflects that (in line with the early changes nationally to the lockdown) the Council is thinking and planning for recovery and transition.

- 1.4 Every service the Council delivers has been impacted by the current situation. The report provides details on these impacts, how the Council has responded to the current situation, new services the Council has set up to support our community and the high level costs associated (to date) with our response.
- 1.5 The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 25th March. The Act contains 'emergency powers' to enable public bodies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the consequences of which is the active coordination of the public service effort across London including in Sutton. This Council is continuing to play its full part responding to all requests from the government in terms of changes to services and data being collected.
- 1.6 All information is correct as of 28th May.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note and endorse the actions detailed in this report.
- 2.2 To agree the COVID-19 Discretionary Business Grant Fund for Sutton (Appendix B).
- 2.3 To note the mechanism for administration of additional care market funding (Section 6.13).
- 2.4 To support the response to London-wide work to prioritise walking and cycling in London and facilitate social distancing in our streets and open spaces as described in Section 5.17-5.19 and to seek proposals for longer term changes to the road network in line with the principles set out in Section 5.17.

3. Local Context

- 3.1 Sutton appears to have come through the initial peak in COVID-19 cases. As of 4pm on 27th May, 739 Sutton residents have tested positive for COVID-19, equivalent to 361 people per 100,000 of the population¹. Sadly, 201 residents are known to have died from COVID-19². This includes confirmed cases, and people with 'possible' COVID-19. Sutton has a high number of care homes (79), of which the majority have had no outbreaks. Further details on how we have been supporting care homes can be found in Section 6.11-6.13.
- 3.2 Sutton Council is working with other public agencies locally, regionally and nationally to ensure a robust response to the spread of COVID-19, and in support of the Government's attempts to manage the spread of the disease.
- 3.3 Sutton Council, like all of the London Boroughs, is part of the network of public services in London. London Local Authority Gold has been given special status by the government and there is a Strategic Coordination Group co-ordinating the emergency services, health agencies, voluntary and faith sector, and utility companies, into a London-wide response.

¹ Coronavirus in the UK, 28th May 2020 (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>)

² Local data from death registrations, 28th May

- 3.4 Council leaders are being consulted through the London Councils route and regular phone calls with Government have involved both Leaders and Chief Executives of all Councils.
- 3.5 Locally, the Council's Borough Resilience Forum, made up of all public service providers within Sutton has met regularly to ensure coordination of services over the period of the emergency.

4. National and Regional Context

- 4.1 As of 4pm on 27th May, 150,903 people have tested positive for coronavirus in England, equivalent to 270 people per 100,000 of the population³. It is estimated that 137,000 people were infected between 4th and 17th May⁴.
- 4.2 There have been 33,362 fatalities amongst people who have tested positive in England⁵. Deaths amongst people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and lower socio-economic groups have been disproportionately higher than the rest of the population. Work is being done to understand why this might be the case; in London it is being led by Professor Kevin Fenton on behalf of Public Health England.
- 4.3 London has been the worst affected regions in England (to date) with 26,867 (302 people per 100,000 of the population) confirmed cases⁶.
- 4.4 On 3rd March, the government adopted a four stage approach to help respond to the coronavirus through the first phase⁷:
- Contain: detect early cases, follow up close contacts, and prevent the disease taking hold in this country for as long as is reasonably possible;
 - Delay: slow the spread in this country, if it does take hold, lowering the peak impact and pushing it away from the winter season;
 - Research: better understand the virus and the actions that will lessen its effect on the UK population; innovate responses including diagnostics, drugs and vaccines; use the evidence to inform the development of the most effective models of care;
 - Mitigate: provide the best care possible for people who become ill, support hospitals to maintain essential services and ensure ongoing support for people ill in the community to minimise the overall impact of the disease on society, public services and on the economy.
- 4.5 Through March, the Government put in place a series of measures to contain and delay the spread of COVID-19. On 16th March, the Government requested people avoid non-essential travel and contact. 1.5 million people with serious underlying health conditions were identified, and advised to 'shield' for 12 weeks. On the 20th March, entertainment, hospitality and indoor leisure venues were closed. This was followed by a series of additional measures to further reduce the spread through the Coronavirus Bill on 23rd March, including the requirement for people to stay at home, unless travelling to and from essential work which could not be done

³ Coronavirus in the UK, 28th May 2020 (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>)

⁴ Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey pilot: England, 21st May 2020 ([ONS.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk))

⁵ Coronavirus in the UK, 28th May 2020 (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>)

⁶ Coronavirus in the UK, 28th May 2020 (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>)

⁷ Coronavirus action plan: a guide to what you can expect across the UK, 3rd March 2020 (gov.uk)

from home, for medical needs, or for one form of exercise a day. Schools were closed to most children, other than children of key workers, and vulnerable children. Non-essential shops were required to close.

- 4.6 The impact of these measures on people's livelihoods has been significant. As of 24th May, 8.4 million people in the UK have been furloughed, from 1 million employers⁸, and between 16th March and 19th May, 2.8 million households made claims for Universal Credit⁹.
- 4.7 The Government is now in the early stages of exiting phase one of the response (contain, delay, research and mitigate), and has published a COVID-19 recovery strategy. The aim at the centre of the plan is to:

'Return to life as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and fairly as possible, in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes'.

The Government will consider three main factors in doing this¹⁰:

- Health effect: direct COVID-19 mortality, indirect harms arising from NHS emergency services being overwhelmed, increases in mortality or other ill health as a result of measures taken to respond to the coronavirus, and the long-term health effects of any increase in deprivation as a result of the economic impacts of measures taken;
- Economic effect: the number of people who can return to work safely, the country's long-term economic future, the sustainability of public finances, financial stability, and the effects of of the Government's measures of different socio-economic groups, businesses, and regions;
- Social effect: the number of education days children lose, the fairness of Government measures on those most impacted by social distancing (considering, for example, mental health, domestic abuse, online fraud), the strength of public services to support the most vulnerable people.

- 4.8 The second phase of the Government's response is 'Smarter controls', seeking to replace the existing social controls with smarter measures, whilst being reactive to any rise in virus transmission. This phase will be in place until the UK can reach phase three; 'Reliable treatment'. This will be through a vaccine, or other treatments, to reduce the virus to manageable levels.

- 4.9 In practice, the Government's recovery strategy means that:

- From 13th May, people in England who cannot work from home can travel to certain types of workplaces. People can also spend more time outdoors, subject to certain restrictions, and travel to open spaces;
- Planning is underway for the phased return of some children to school and childcare settings on 1st June. Initially, primary schools in England will open for all children in

⁸ HMRC coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics, 27th May 2020 ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

⁹ Universal Credit declarations (claims) and advances: management information, 26th May 2020 ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

¹⁰ Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, 11th May 2020 ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

Reception, Year 1, and Year 6, in addition to vulnerable children, and children of key workers. The Government is aiming for all primary school-aged children to return to school for a month before the summer break, if risk assessments indicate that it is appropriate. Secondary schools will also be asked to provide some face-to-face support for pupils in Years 10 and 12 to supplement their remote education. Schools will be expected to put in place protective measures to reduce risks;

- In addition, from 1st and then the the 15th June, some non-essential shops will be allowed to open, with additional cleaning and social distancing measures in place;
- Further adjustments to the current restrictions are scheduled to take place from 4th July, subject to risk assessment. This could include opening some of the remaining businesses that have been required to close (e.g. places of worship, leisure facilities, hospitality and personal care). Businesses will be required to put in place additional cleaning measures, and enable social distancing. It is likely this will be phased, to test whether businesses can adopt these measures.

4.10 To reflect current patterns of travel, and allow physical distancing to take place in high priority, or high traffic areas, a number of cities (including parts of London) have introduced temporary infrastructure to reallocate road space for pedestrians and cyclists. This includes closing roads to through traffic, creating additional footpath space, improving cycle facilities, or lowering speed limits, to ensure the safety of residents.

4.11 The measures put in place by the Government required Sutton Council to put in place support for residents and businesses, including those prescribed by the Government, such as the Business Support Grant, as well as discretionary measures, such identifying residents who are likely to be at increased risk of financial hardship as a result of the measures put in place to manage the coronavirus, and proactively contacting them to outline the support available. See Section 6 for updates from each of the workstreams under the COVID-19 programme.

5. Impact on Service Delivery

5.1 In response to the COVID-19 threat, we are continuing to focus on protecting our community and supporting our most vulnerable residents, and our key workers, to keep safe and reduce the spread of infection. Business continuity plans have been put to the test and staff have risen to the challenge to provide a flexible approach in constantly changing circumstances.

5.2 The Council has taken responsive action, changing services and closing facilities to the public, taking into account government's guidance where appropriate. Some of those steps have been taken in response to the requirements of social distancing and ensuring that Council facilities are not providing incentives for people to gather in potentially unsafe groups. Others are designed to support the work of our colleagues and to allow our own staff to focus their efforts and energies on the most crucial activities at this time, when all Council staff are under pressure.

5.3 Some services which are not essential in current circumstances have been reduced or put on hold, especially where those services cannot easily safely be delivered. These actions have

been made within the scheme of delegation, or the emergency procedures set out in the constitution. Set out in Section 5.7-5.22 are the key changes that have been put in place.

- 5.4 The Council has received additional funding to support residents and businesses impacted by the current situation. This money has been distributed to those people that need it as quickly as possible, in line with Government guidance.
- 5.5 Building on the Sutton Plan partnership, the Council has worked closely with all of its partners including the voluntary sector, health partners and providers. Sutton has a long history of excellent partnership working and it is these strong partnerships that have enabled all public service providers in the borough to come together and meet the needs of the population especially those most vulnerable to COVID-19. Where the need for additional funding or resources has been identified, the Council has taken steps to quickly put this into place.
- 5.6 Over the last ten weeks the Council, through taking early, considered actions, has been able to maintain many key services to residents and businesses.
- 5.7 Household waste collection (including recycling, food and garden waste) has continued. These services have continued to operate well. Initially some amendments were made to bulky collections, but all services are now operating.
- 5.8 Parks have remained open, and in the main have been used responsibly. Guidance has been provided for residents on how to stay safe whilst using them, updated in line with government advice. Car parks have been closed for the Easter and early May bank holiday weekends to avoid them being a destination.
- 5.9 Street cleaning services have been maintained, although there has been a reduction in requirement for the service as a result of social distancing measures. This will be monitored as measures are lifted.
- 5.10 Library services have moved completely online with the delivery of online activities and resources including Rhymetime through Facebook, The Locals: Diaries project, Ebooks, Digital Newspapers, and online membership for new joiners.
- 5.11 All offices except Civic have been temporarily closed. Limited reception provision is in place for those who absolutely need to visit in person, and particularly for homeless people being supported by Encompass.
- 5.12 The Council closed and took control of all leisure centres to provide other vital services including the food hub that has operated out of Westcroft, delivering food to those who urgently need it.
- 5.13 As of 13th May, the Household Reuse and Recycle Centre (HRRC) reopened, with visits to the site strictly by appointment only, to ensure the centre runs safely, and in accordance with Government guidelines.

- 5.14 All non-essential face-to-face registration (including births) have been suspended in line with guidance both to facilitate social distancing, and to focus on the requirement to additional register deaths. As a result weddings and civil partnership ceremonies have been postponed.
- 5.15 Bandon Hill and Sutton cemeteries are open in the afternoon and early evening through the week, and all day at the weekend, following a short period when they were closed at the height of the crisis to allow for social distancing. Families have been limiting the number of mourners to between six and ten at the graveside. The Chapel has been closed, as it is too small to allow social distancing.
- 5.16 Schools have been kept open to serve vulnerable children and the children of key workers (further detail provided in 6.21). We are now working with schools to facilitate re-opening for designated year groups from 1st June. Home to school transport has been provided to enable vulnerable children and children of key workers to be able to access education provision.
- 5.17 Transport for London (TfL) has announced that all Local Implementation Plans (LIP) allocations for 20/21 are suspended. There will be no announcements this year on Liveable Neighbourhoods bids. Instead, TfL have created a £45 million fund for boroughs (for six months) to bid into to deliver projects in line with new TfL 'Streetspace for London' guidance, focussed on boosting safety for people walking and cycling and aiding social distancing. Bids need to be submitted by late June.
- 5.18 Some of this work involves immediate, temporary changes to street layouts to aid social distancing and improve road safety. The initial tranche of this work has already been implemented.. Retrospective bids to TfL will be made for these short term measures with the expectation that funding will be received. If these bids are not supported then any works already undertaken will need to be funded from within existing budgets. All these temporary changes are low cost in nature.
- 5.19 Medium term proposals for the next six months will be brought to Strategy and Resources Committee in July. Such measures are likely to include lower cost versions of existing LIP or Liveable Neighbourhood proposals, or new proposals that have been developed in light of the Streetspace guidance. Examples will include improved pedestrian and cycle facilities and proposals to create low traffic neighbourhoods. Enforcement of all non-safety related parking restrictions has been suspended for three months until the end of June.
- 5.20 The option to defer Council Tax payments for two months has been put in place, so payments can be spread over June to March rather than April to January. To date 1,800 households have taken up this offer.
- 5.21 In addition to the business support schemes that have been put in place (see Section 6.54-6.60) to support local business and voluntary and community sector organisations operating from Council buildings rent payments were suspended for 3 months for around 70 organisations.
- 5.22 As the government has started to relax some social distancing measures, the Council has begun to re-open some services and facilities in line with government guidance on additional

safeguards, and where it is considered safe to do so. The Council will continue to closely monitor government guidance and will work with our local partners and other London boroughs as appropriate to re-open services as it is safe to do so.

6. Workstream Updates

6.1 The Council's response to COVID-19 has been structured around a classic Emergency Planning approach, with regular Gold meetings supported by a number of key workstreams. Each workstream has a strategic lead who is responsible for ensuring that the workstream is delivered and any issues are resolved and / or escalated where appropriate.

6.2 The response has been (and continues to be) overseen at a strategic level by the Council's Gold group (chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, comprising the corporate Management Team other key officers), and at an operational level by a Silver group made up of the Director of Public Health and operational leads for each workstream. Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP), Encompass and Cognus have been working very closely with the council and in recent weeks their Chief Executives have been attending gold meetings. The response has been coordinated by Emergency Planning and the Council's Programme Management Office.

6.3 Set out in the following sections are updates for each workstream, setting out the scope of each, what has been achieved to date, key challenges and priorities going forward. All workstreams have been delivered in partnership with key public service providers across Sutton. The workstreams are as follows:

- Health and Social Care
- Education
- Communications
- Workforce
- Excess Deaths
- Community Hub and Voluntary sector
- Housing
- Business Support

Health and Social Care

Children's Social Care

6.4 In response to COVID-19, and to ensure that all statutory responsibilities have continued to be delivered and essential services maintained, a senior management coordination group was formed, consisting of representatives from Children's Social Care, Education, Schools (through Designated Safeguarding representatives) and Health. The work has primarily focused on:

- Risk assessing all children open to children's social care (over 1,200), and working in partnership with schools to seek assurance on vulnerable children, including those with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), not attending school;

- Mobilising the workforce to respond to priority statutory responsibilities; including remote working, daily roll call, virtual meetings (including child protection conferences);
- Reviewing the Early Help service, leading to a dynamic response where practitioners supported other key service requirements;
- A partnership approach has been taken, consisting of Children's Social Care, Education, Cognus, Schools, and Health. The group oversees performance and communication across the network;
- Ensuring placement sufficiency would meet the needs of Sutton's children in care.
- Implementing contingency plans for increase in demand and reduction of provision, such as developing a "back up" provision that could have been utilised for a residential children's home;
- Sutton's Care Leavers have been supported with an increased weekly allowance to help with access to transport and weekly shopping;
- Coordinating the provision of IT equipment for vulnerable children so they can continue to access education;
- Quality Assuring services by developing further performance reporting and undertaking two audits; the first on the Children's First Contact Service, and the second on the risk assessments completed by children's social care.

6.5 Plans are being developed to enable more face-to-face contact soon. This will ensure the service can respond to an anticipated increase in demand when children return to school.

Adult's Social Care

- 6.6 All statutory responsibilities continue to have been delivered, and the service has additionally focused on the priorities of supporting the local NHS, ensuring vulnerable people are safeguarded, and their essential services are maintained.
- 6.7 In response to COVID-19, an Adult's Coordination group was formed, consisting of representatives from across the Council and key partners including Encompass. Further to this, coordinating meetings already in place with NHS and other partner agencies were extended to support and manage the collaborative response.
- 6.8 Business continuity plans were implemented; where possible staff moved to home working, undertaking duties virtually. Services providing care (START), supporting hospital discharge and emergency duty maintained a presence at the Civic Offices and St Helier Hospital, from which they go out and work with people in their homes. The START team has also been working to support care homes where necessary.
- 6.9 Risk assessments have been undertaken for all adults living in the community receiving a social care package of care.
- 6.10 As a local health and care system, the local care market has been supported through:
- The provision of emergency personal protective equipment;
 - Webinars, providing advice and support on emerging guidance;

- Ensuring access to testing for both residents and staff;
- Weekly Newsletters to all care providers;
- Additional financial support;
- Weekly phone calls to all providers, to understand challenges and work with them to resolve;
- Enhanced operational support, increased from 5 days, to 7 days a week.

- 6.11 Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Council and the Sutton Health and Care system has been working closely with all care homes in the borough to understand capacity, ensure they are following all necessary guidance and to resolve issues as they come up. On 14th May, the Government announced the requirement of local authorities to review or put in place a care home support plan. The Council, with its partners, has already put in place a number of plans, setting out how the local care market will be supported. These plans are reviewed periodically, and will be used to complete the government mandated template by 29th May. Locally, the planning return will be developed with the South West London CCG, and engagement with Sutton Health and Care Executive which includes representation of Health and Wellbeing Board members.
- 6.12 We recognised early that our care market would need additional financial support through the early part of COVID-19. As a council we altered payment terms to ensure adequate cash flow and committed over £400,000 in additional one-off payments to the market (this is inline with the principles set out in the LGA advice on provider payments). So far £320,000 has been released to providers.
- 6.13 The Council are continually working with care homes to plan, review, respond and improve our ways of working to ensure residents and staff have everything they need to be safe and provide high quality services. As a result the majority of Care Homes have remained Covid-19 free to date. On Friday 15th May, the Government announced that an extra £2.1m has been allocated to Sutton as part of the Infection Prevention Control Fund. 75% of this funding is mandated to be diverted directly to care homes, with local discretion for the remaining 25%. The Council and its partners, are in the process of developing a plan for the allocation of the additional 25%.
- 6.14 Social care teams continue to oversee safeguarding, including Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), and work in partnership with other agencies to proactively protect the most vulnerable and monitor those at the highest risk, as identified through RAG ratings. Social care teams are continuing to manage the safeguarding demand as "business as usual". Additional management oversight has been put in place to ensure timely management.
- 6.15 The service continues to work with the Joint Intelligence Group (JIG), including partners from the CCG, to provide daily oversight to review the information submitted by providers onto the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Market insight tracker to identify potential risks and areas for support to care homes and other care providers. Ongoing compliance is ensured through regular monitoring, and action taken if required.

- 6.16 Oversight of DoLS is integrated into the JIG meetings, considering restrictions placed on residents as a result of COVID-19. The DoLS lead links in with staff from the Care Home Support Team to undertake joint visits, where necessary.
- 6.17 The Council has worked in partnership to support the local NHS to manage the situation, key activities have been:
- Working collaboratively on-site in St Helier to support safe discharge from hospital through the creation of the St Helier 'Hub' base by merging of the Sutton Health & Care, Sutton Continuing Health Care (CHC: SWL CCG) and Local Authority Hospital Pathway Social Work teams;
 - Ensuring there are no delays to hospital discharge through daily tracking and monitoring of all admissions through Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) leads in the 'Hub' (inclusive of Sutton residents in out of borough hospitals);
 - Applying the Home First Principle in all cases, taking account of social circumstance and ability to be cared for at home to self-isolate and or shielding for the individual and or anyone else living in the same property as required;
 - Ongoing tracking, monitoring and reviews for all interim step-down placements, collectively across agencies (Local Authority / SWL CCG);
 - The START service continues to provide short term care and reablement service, facilitating discharge from hospital. Redeployees have been recruited from other Directorates to support the service in the event of increased demand.
- 6.18 Plans are being developed for the next phases of the response, balancing the need for increased face to face meetings with residents, and protecting the most vulnerable from risk of infection.

Education

- 6.19 On 23rd March, schools were closed to all pupils other than vulnerable pupils (those pupils whose parents have an EHCP or have a social worker). Up until 12th May attendance at schools within these cohorts has been based on an assessment of whether a pupil can safely remain at home (for reasons such as an underlying health condition), or whether attendance at school would be in the child's best interests.
- 6.20 Daily attendance data from schools shows that total numbers of pupils started at about 1,000 (out of circa 40,000 overall) reducing to about 230, excluding bank holidays, increasing back up to just under 900. Attendance figures in Sutton are in line with Borough averages across London both in terms of total number of pupils as well as the proportions of pupils that are vulnerable in attendance.
- 6.21 Throughout this period there has been excellent partnership working taking place between children's social care, Cognus, and designated safeguarding leads in schools. All vulnerable pupils have had regular contact from professionals both from school and social work professionals; Cognus staff have called every family of the 1,850 pupils in the Borough with an EHCP. To coordinate key activities, including the Council's approach to communications, Free

School Meals, provision of laptops to disadvantaged pupils, and other COVID-19 related activities, a Headteacher coordination group was convened early on in the response period.

- 6.22 The Government announced on 11th May a phased return for education provision across England. We recognise the importance of education and that for some schools social distancing will be difficult. The focus is no longer about pupils remaining at home where it is safe to do so, but rather pupils now being in school unless it would not be safe to do so. All early years settings have been asked to prepare to open from 1st June and for primary schools Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 are to be back in school in 'smaller sizes', from this point also (in addition to vulnerable pupils). Secondary schools and further education colleges are being asked to prepare for some face to face contact with those Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year, to support their continued remote learning.
- 6.23 The return of schools for some year groups is a positive development and a step back towards normality, but it requires significant planning, particularly on the part of primary schools. Officers are working closely with representatives of the Regional Schools Commissioner to support schools in their preparations however the majority of planning work will be undertaken by Senior Leadership Teams and Governing Bodies in Schools, including where appropriate providing public health advice can be sought.
- 6.24 All of the preparatory work required is being taken forward by senior leadership teams in schools. Colleagues from Cognus and the Council are supporting all schools regardless of type working collaboratively to develop plans, share problems / solutions and coordinate activities. Schools are currently liaising with parents to assess levels of likely demand in order to inform their preparations. At the time of writing all schools in Sutton have plans to open on (or shortly after 1st June).

Excess Deaths

- 6.25 Throughout the Crisis, focus has been to protect the NHS. One of the key areas that has been planned for is an increase in volume and frequency of people dying from the disease. Like all Councils we were required to plan for a much greater increase than has in fact been the case. The Council has played an active role in the London Mortality Planning Group which is working to ensure that the capacity is available to manage the consequences of a predicted increase in deaths. The workstream was initially set up to plan for a worst case scenario in which deaths outstripped the ability of normal processes (registration, mortuary capacity, funeral management, cemetery and crematorium provision) to cope.
- 6.26 Fortunately, to date, the Borough's existing arrangements have been found to be sufficient. The purpose has therefore been to coordinate information, identify risks and resolve operational issues in response to the London wide picture. This has involved multi agency working and sensitive liaison with faith groups.
- 6.27 Building links to partners in the death management process, such as funeral directors, cemetery operational contractors, and St Helier Hospital has been key to gathering relevant and accurate information to aid decision making. The work primarily focused on:

- Ensuring all affected service areas are kept abreast of the complex variations in government guidance and legislation including liaising with the local fragmented Funeral Director sector and assessing where it might be necessary to intervene;
- Responding to changes in demand and resilience concerns, including recruitment of redeployed staff and opening a second Registrar's Office at Civic;
- Working with our partners to ensure that there is capacity to increase the number of burials that can be carried out.

6.28 The workstream also worked closely with faith and belief groups across the borough, ensuring the local death management process was understood, and any issues could be raised.

Community Hub

6.29 In response to the commitment to "shield" the most vulnerable, a Community Hub was set up, and has been in operation since March. The Hub operates through referrals made from Government and NHS data lists, contact via the Council's website and contact centre, or from the voluntary sector and partners. The NHS has identified 7,775 people in Sutton whose medical conditions are such that they are at greatest risk of becoming seriously ill. The Hub can also be accessed by anyone in Sutton who needs help or support during this period.

6.30 The Community Hub aims to provide the right support at the right time, to the right people. This is done through proactive calls to residents on the Government or NHS data lists. A helpline, self-referral online form, and specific inbox for COVID-19 queries, operates 7 days a week. A triage process is in place where requests for help are either passed to the voluntary sector (befriending, shopping, medication, emergency food, etc.), Social Care team, or Welfare Reform team (maximisation of benefits).

6.31 Food distribution is organised from Westcroft Leisure Centre. Food is sourced from a mix of supermarkets and wholesalers. Food distribution takes place on Saturdays, staffed by 35 redeployed Council staff. 20 volunteers pack food parcels, which are delivered to residents by a team of 90+ volunteer drivers.

6.32 The Hub is staffed by 70+ redeployees from the Council's workforce who have volunteered to work on call handling, triage and food supply. The Council is also working with the voluntary sector to co-ordinate the help and support available and those in the community who are generously volunteering their time and talent to support the national effort.

6.33 As of 28th May, fulfillment of referrals and requests for support from the Hub is as follows:

- 5,578 shielding individuals contacted and triaged:
 - 4,570 don't require support
 - 1000 are receiving the support they require from the Council
- 879 non-shielding helpline support requests all of which have been assessed and are receiving the support they require.

- 6.34 The Community Hub has become increasingly important in ensuring that those in greatest need get the food, essential supplies, welfare and social support that they need. The Hub was established at pace to meet an emergency need. A longer-term, sustainable Community Hub model could provide a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary service between the Council and voluntary sector partners, to meet ongoing need exacerbated by the current health emergency, relating to mental health, bereavement, wellbeing, financial support, access to social care and support for unpaid carers.
- 6.35 The Digital team worked closely with the Hub to get the forms online to enable residents to register for help. These have been continuously iterated and improved over time. In addition we have also launched the ViaVan application to help manage food deliveries. This is an Uber-like app that organises delivery routes for drivers, tracks deliveries and notifies the recipient when the delivery is expected. This app has helped speed up the delivery rounds (saving approximately 45 minutes per round of deliveries). Sutton is leading the way with this technology in London and we will be sharing this approach with our colleagues across London in due course.
- 6.36 Planning for future development of the Hub on this model has started. This consists of helping residents being supported by the Hub to be resilient and independent again. Residents are being supported to access online supermarket delivery slots or linking them with a volunteer who can shop for them. Households facing financial crisis and who do not have the means to pay for food are being assessed and referred for appropriate support (such as the Sutton Foodbank).
- 6.37 In order to effectively support a whole range of resident needs as a result of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures imposed a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team has been set up to triage all referrals for support. The triage team is made up of staff from the CCG, Community Action Sutton, the Volunteer Centre Sutton, and welfare support to help with financial issues. The team will shortly grow to include mental health and social care professionals, able to respond without having to refer people on for the specialist support they need.
- 6.38 The focus of the hub going forward is to support people to become independent again and access food themselves. The hub will also play a key role in the Council's support for NHS test and trace (see 8.1).
- 6.39 Funds have also been made available for a Hardship Fund, to provide Council Tax relief to vulnerable people and households to help those affected most by COVID-19. The Sutton allocation is £1.6m. Every working age claimant has received an award of £150 (or if the amount they owe was less than £150, the full amount of their 2020/21 liability). To date 5,606 claimants have received awards and been sent revised bills reflecting the reduced amount they owe. The total spend is currently £825,000.

Voluntary Sector

- 6.40 The voluntary sector workstream covers coordination of all activity relating to the Council and the voluntary sector. From the voluntary sector this is led by Community Action Sutton, Age UK

Sutton and Volunteers Centre Sutton with significant input from other organisations. This workstream covers all elements of support provided by the voluntary sector including:

- Volunteers and drivers to staff the food hub;
- Volunteers to deliver food and emergency medication;
- Staff and expertise to work in a joint triage and referral service;
- Social and emotional support;
- Support to ward level / mutual aid groups.

6.41 The voluntary sector has been key to the Councils response and have been involved in the planning and delivery of services from the outset. Where necessary the Council has provided resources (funding and staff time) to ensure that voluntary sector organisations are resilient and are able to respond to the increased demand placed on them. Additional funding has been provided to Age UK Sutton and Sutton Volunteers Centre. This funding was initially agreed for three months and is to be reviewed on a monthly basis thereafter.

6.42 The work between voluntary and community organisations and the Council is now well integrated. Some Council staff are virtually seconded to work in voluntary organisations and similarly voluntary sector staff are working in the triage team as a way of sharing learning and embedding collaborative working. Conversations are now beginning about how we can build on this way of working, with the aim of considering how we commission and work differently, to ensure that it is maintained.

6.43 A COVID-19 Crisis Fund has been set up by Community Action Sutton. The fund is made up of:

- £100,000 from Sutton & Merton CCG Charitable Trust;
- £40,000 from Sutton Community Fund allocation for 2020/2021;
- £27,000 from SES Water charitable donation to Community Action Sutton;
- Funding donated through Sutton giving as a result of COVID-19.

6.44 The key aim of the fund is to assist voluntary and community sector groups and mutual aid / other organisations providing services and support to individuals and families affected by the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic. The grant is specifically for those organisations that are delivering COVID-19 frontline services or whose ability to operate has been severely impacted due to the pandemic.

Housing

6.45 Whilst there have been significant impacts on housing in general across the borough, the focus has been to ensure that rough sleeper have been accommodated in suitable accommodation and that households at risk of homelessness have been supported.

6.46 The Council has moved 13 rough sleepers off the streets, shelters and assessment centres, into more appropriate accommodation where their health could be protected and the wider transmission of the coronavirus could be stopped.

6.47 A further 61 people at imminent risk of rough sleeping have been supported into suitable emergency accommodation. There has been a 91% increase in telephone calls from residents worried about the security of their tenure, benefits, and financial concerns. Approaches from households threatened with homelessness have increased by 7% compared with 2019/20 but the total number placements into emergency accommodation has risen by 107%. The Council has continued to work to:

- Respond to the increased demand from households presenting as at imminent risk;
- Assess and manage the risk of those households in emergency accommodation;
- Provide support to vulnerable households in emergency and temporary accommodation.

6.48 Encompass worked closely with SHP to increase the number of self-contained units of temporary accommodation which facilitated self isolation for those households most at risk and to source new sources of emergency accommodation. All families are now placed in self-contained accommodation.

6.49 A new and fast track hospital discharge procedure was put in place to ensure the smooth transition from hospitals of those households that were homeless on discharge. Further work is underway to link former rough sleepers, and those at risk of returning to rough sleeping currently in emergency accommodation, into health services.

6.50 Encompass have made 200+ phone calls, issued more than 60 Food Bank vouchers, and assisted in the delivery of at least 20 food parcels, starter packs (bedding and crockery), beds, microwaves and miscellaneous items to our most vulnerable households in emergency accommodation.

6.51 In the longer term it will be necessary to identify step-down arrangements for all households accommodated, including the provision of appropriate support to prevent people returning to the streets.

Sutton Housing Partnership

6.52 SHP has been maintaining vital services to residents and keeping communities safe: this includes cleaning, and maintenance. Ongoing essential services have also continued including responding to anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, and safeguarding which are even more critical during lockdown. Interventions have been prompt and effective.

6.53 SHP has worked to ensure the prompt reletting of our homes to support hospital discharges and to house the homeless. Contact has been maintained with all vulnerable residents, particularly to those who are likely to struggle to cope with confinement and the restrictions it brings.

6.54 To prevent tenants from falling into debt, SHP has been encouraging them to keep paying their rent, ideally by direct debit. SHP has committed not to evict anyone who is in difficulty because of the impact of COVID-19. In addition, SHP has been working together with partners to connect people to available support and develop resilience and support a range of concerns

such as eating and exercising, good mental health and not becoming socially isolated, money and paying the bills. Work is being done to consider how to support these people moving forward.

- 6.55 The Sutton Domestic Abuse Strategic Board met on 14th May with Health, Education, and voluntary sector partners in attendance to review the data emerging about domestic abuse during lockdown and to coordinate the Borough response to this. It is anticipated that demand for specialist support for victims will increase as lockdown begins to ease and a range of practical measures were identified to address this. The Metropolitan Police are being included in the work.

Business Support

- 6.56 The vast majority of businesses in the borough have suffered severe hardship due to COVID-19. Whether it is because they have been forced to close their premises or had a reduction in sales, patronage or business due to the lockdown.
- 6.57 A Business Recovery Workstream has been established to understand the impact on businesses in Sutton. A cross-Council Business Recovery working group and Recovery plan is being developed to put in place measures to support the Borough's businesses. We will work with them to reopen and re-establish activity safely in the short and medium term.
- 6.58 A clear understanding of specific businesses needs is being developed and we are working closely with our business improvement districts, business networks and pan-london partners to ensure we understand how businesses have been impacted and to design schemes to support them over the coming months, building on what is already in place.
- 6.59 Much work is already underway. Regulatory Services have been working with businesses to ensure compliance with the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020, providing advice and guidance to enable businesses to transition to takeaway, on-line or click and collect services. They have been active in alerting businesses to business scams.
- 6.60 The Council is also working to support business, specifically by administering the business rate relief scheme. The team has identified 941 businesses who qualify for the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality 100% relief for 2020/21. These businesses have received the relief meaning they have no business rate liability for the 2020/21 financial year. The total amount of relief awarded to date is £26.135m. Bills reflecting the zero charge were sent to all the businesses on 12th May.
- 6.61 £10,000 and £25,000 grants are available for a number of businesses. To date 1,483 smaller businesses have received a £10k grant and 338 larger businesses have received a £25k grant. The total amount of grants awarded is £23.28m and the team are still working on identifying other businesses who may qualify for a grant. The total amount of funding made available by the government was £28.16m.

6.62 A new discretionary business grant fund was announced in early May, to be administered by local authorities. Sutton is also preparing to administer this fund to as many small businesses as possible. The process for doing so is set out in Appendix B.

Communications

6.63 The intention has been to ensure that all communication has been managed proactively to ensure consistent, accurate and timely messaging throughout the crisis. Communications have focused on sharing what services continue to be available and which are not. Content across channels has been developed to explain, interpret and apply national guidance for our local population. This is supplemented, as appropriate, by national and pan-London campaign materials developed by PHE England and London Councils.

6.64 A dedicated COVID-19 webpage has been created and regularly updated. The pages have had an average of 3,795 daily visits with a peak of over 10,000 visits in late March. Web page content and structure is kept under review and updates are made on an almost daily basis to ensure the web pages continue to reflect the latest developments in the evolving local and national picture.

6.65 The Council has created and administered the Sutton Coronavirus Support group on Facebook. The Facebook support group has 3,450 members and has seen high levels of engagement. The page is monitored seven days a week to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of posts to the page.

6.66 The Council's social media channels have been key to disseminating local and national messaging. Key service updates have been posted regularly, and all signpost the COVID-19 webpages for detailed information.

6.67 The fortnightly Sutton Scene, our resident e-newsletter, has been changed to a weekly publication schedule. Since the COVID-19 outbreak started, subscriptions to Sutton Scene have increased by 230 subscribers.

6.68 The team has also worked with the Sutton CCG and voluntary sector to share and amplify the reach of important campaign messages and information targeted at the local population. This has included promotion of the 'Your NHS is still here for you' campaign.

6.69 Internally, the workstream has delivered daily staff and partner updates to LBS, Cognus, SHP, Encompass and Sutton College staff. Initial informal feedback shows that these have been well received by staff. These updates are being supplemented by weekly updates to managers, to highlight and signpost to workforce and IT guidance - which is also available on the intranet for all staff.

6.70 Members of the Corporate Management team and the Leader have all participated in web-casts with staff to ensure that they are informed, engaged and that their experiences are informing planning as we move into the recovery phase.

Workforce

- 6.71 The Council's workforce has responded magnificently during the covid-19 crisis. Staff have gone above and beyond to ensure that the Council can still deliver key services to our residents and that those most vulnerable people have continued to receive the support they need.
- 6.72 HR capacity has been refocused to critical activity to and implementing new processes as required (deployment service, support with monitoring testing, moving to virtual recruitment for critical posts). Key activities have been:
- Deployed more people to critical roles than any other borough, with 228 staff deployed both internally and into our partners;
 - Seconding 32 health visitors and nurses to NHS, and furloughing 57 tutors from Sutton College;
 - Producing and continuously updating interim workforce guidance for staff and managers;
 - Producing and promoting resources and guidance for supporting mental health and wellbeing for staff; re-focussing the learning and development offer and moving it online
 - Communicating with staff and managers (regular managers' updates, new intranet pages, Insight articles, four live managers' surgeries attended by over 160 people); keeping Trade Unions informed.
- 6.73 The workforce workstream is now changing its focus to remain agile enough to respond to issues / guidance as they continue to emerge whilst simultaneously working on plans to ensure there is a coordinated approach to the phased return to office working, and the recall of deployed, seconded and furloughed staff.
- 6.74 Overnight, the introduction of the lockdown resulted in officers moving from working in Council offices to working from home. On a normal day approximately 25% of people connected remotely, it is now normal to see over 90%. The Council's IT has operated well given that there was very little time to plan or deliver the responses; and the use of Google and video conferencing has enabled the work of the Council to continue.
- 6.75 The Council has supported colleagues as they move to working from home, rolling out equipment as required. The lockdown also required moving our call centre to working from home, with new phones systems quickly put into place. It has also adapted to support the running of remote Council and Committee meetings.
- 6.76 Sickness absence has fallen considerably since the move to working remotely for the majority of the workforce. The Council will continue to promote and support ways of working that will maintain reduced sickness absence and increased productivity / effectiveness going forward.
- 6.77 Looking ahead, the focus will be on these immediate key areas:
- Providing a set of principles that will set out how we will support staff and managers

both in making these decisions and also as they either return to the office or continue to work at home. These will provide an overarching framework for these decisions, but also leave sufficient flexibility for managers to respond to the differing needs and circumstances of individual members of staff, and services;

- Provide advice and guidance on recall from deployment, secondment and furlough as well as return to office working;
- Providing longer term support and guidance for home working (risk assessments, improved access to equipment eg chairs);
- Develop approach for long term mental health support / post traumatic support as well as ongoing support (financial / physical / workplace / emotional) for all staff, recognising that staff will have been differently affected;

7. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 7.1 PPE is not a workstream in itself, but the ability to source and utilise PPE has been key to enabling the delivery of services (often to the most vulnerable). Throughout the crisis the demand for PPE has been unprecedented and the Council has had to source PPE from a number of different sources in order to ensure that staff, partners and suppliers have access to the supplies they need. The Council has been able make use of existing supply arrangements as well as emergency supplies provided by the NHS and Government.
- 7.2 More recently a London wide contract for the supply of PPE has been developed, of which Sutton is the sub-regional lead for our region. Orders for over £4m of PPE have been placed, including over £1m for Sutton.
- 7.3 The Council has worked closely with Care providers to ensure that they have access to the supplies of PPE they need. The Council will continue to source PPE in support of the care market where this is necessary.
- 7.4 The Council has set up a PPE store in the Sutton College building where orders are received, checked, stored and passed onto our regional partner boroughs, as well as Sutton services, partners, and suppliers which require PPE to keep their workforce safe whilst they continue to provide vital services for our residents.

8. NHS Test and Trace

- 8.1 The Council will play its role in the new government Test and Trace system. The system, designed to identify people who have come into close contact with people who test positive for COVID-19 went live on 28th May 2020 in England, with the aim of supporting the move from national lockdown, to more targeted measures.
- 8.2 NHS Track and Trace will contact residents who have received a positive test result for coronavirus and work with them to identify any recent close contacts who may have potentially been exposed. These contacts will then be contacted and advised to self-isolate for fourteen days and to get a test themselves if they develop symptoms. In this manner the service aims to quickly break chains of transmission of the virus within the local community and to prevent

further cases. The success of this approach will be vital to maintain the current easing of lockdown restrictions in Sutton.

8.3 The key roles for the council and local partners will include:

- The provision of support to individuals who may find it difficult to self-isolate. This will be provided through the existing Community Hub in terms of support around issues such as mental wellbeing, finances or food.
- A clear communication strategy so that businesses and communities understand the importance of NHS Track and Trace and its potential impact on them.
- Work to identify high-risk settings and assist with control measures to prevent future outbreaks; e.g. in care homes, schools and hostels.
- To lead local incident management teams, with Public Health England and other partners, to control any future local outbreaks of the virus.

9. Transition to Recovery

9.1 The Council's transition plans will focus on how we continue to support our communities, business and our own workforce as we move into the next phase of our response.

9.2 As the Council moves from the initial crisis response to recovery, there is a requirement to plan the transition from the current ways of working and delivery of services, through to what this will look like in the 'new normal'. The timetable for recovery will be based on a number of different factors including the speed at which current social distancing restrictions are lifted over the coming months, but also our own priorities for reinstating services.

9.3 The Council will continue to work with our partners to ensure that our respective recovery plans are aligned and dependencies are identified. To date the Councils has been working to a number of key principles for recovery:

- Ensure that individuals, communities and businesses can access the support they need to mitigate the ongoing impact of COVID-19 over the coming months;
- Engagement with and support of our staff will be key in building new ways of working and the support of managers and staff will enable us to get there. In addition, ongoing communication with our providers, partners and residents on preparing for future resilience will also be vitally important;
- Build on the innovation shown in how we have responded quickly to deliver essential services in a different way, and we want to keep this and build on it going forward;
- Maintain strong relationships with our voluntary sector and new social care pathways, and we want to maintain these relationships going forwards;
- To take the opportunity to harness the opportunities that a digital approach to services represents;
- Align with national, London and regional planning where appropriate;
- Services and the Council as a whole will need to be resilient to future further outbreaks, learning from and building upon experience to date.

10. Impacts and Implications

Financial

- 10.1 The implications of COVID-19 and the Council's response will have a significant financial impact. The government has announced funding in a number of areas. Emergency funding of £1.6 bn was announced on 20th March. Sutton has been allocated £4.9m and this was received on 27th March. This is not ring-fenced but is intended to cover additional costs to the Council and demand on services, including social care. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have been funded separately for the additional costs of discharging and keeping people out of Hospital. The Council is already working closely with the CCG to ensure these costs are tracked and funded appropriately.
- 10.2 A second emergency funding round of a further £1.6b was announced in April. Sutton received an allocation of £5.6m, bringing the total announced for Sutton to date to £10.5m. The Council is maintaining a forecast of spend that will be incurred against this grant as well as the level of income to the Council lost as a result of some services being closed (e.g. Leisure Centres) and others experiencing a fall in demand for fee paying activities (e.g. Car Parks). It is also anticipated that some savings originally planned to be delivered in 2020/21 will now be delayed as a result of the need to deploy staff to the COVID-19 response and the increased level of support needed from some Council services.
- 10.3 These forecasts are very indicative given the significant uncertainty about when, and how, lockdown will be lifted and the ongoing impact on Council services over the medium term. It is likely the economic damage and associated impact on residents will require significant Council response going forwards even after the virus has been contained.
- 10.4 The total estimated financial impact to the Council is currently £19.385m, a pressure of £8.028m over and above Council and CCG funding, see appendix A. The impact of business rates and council tax income is estimated to be £5.364m and is part of the overall total shown above. Accounting for these areas forms part of the Collection fund and the impact of losses in 2020/21 would fall in the following year 2021/22. There is continued discussion with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to ensure they are aware of the pressures and costs falling to Councils. There is expectation that further funding will follow if required but clearly there is a risk to our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). A further report will be provided to this Committee in September.
- 10.5 There has been other support from the government that has been ringfenced for specific purposes. The costs associated with the business rates holiday for 2020/21, the discretionary business grants scheme and the Hardship fund are funded fully by the government. Sutton has been allocated grants to fund each of these of £28.2m, £1.4m and £1.6m respectively. Additionally funding has been announced for Infection control in Care homes, Test, Track and Trace and Reopening High Street Safely.

Legal

- 10.6 The Coronavirus Act 2020 enables the Council to respond to the emergency situation and manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Act contains temporary measures designed to amend existing legislative provisions and introduce new statutory powers which mitigate the impact of the virus.
- 10.7 The measures set out in the report are in accordance with the emergency arrangements and the requirements of the guidance, regulations and directions issued by the Government under the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the consequential regulations and directions issued thereunder.

11. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix letter	Title
A	COVID-19 Expenditure
B	Discretionary Grants Fund

Background documents
None

Audit Trail		
Version	Final	Date: 29 May 2020
Consultation with other officers		
Finance	Yes	Richard Simpson
Legal	Yes	Stephen Gerrard
Equality Impact Assessment required?	No	N/A

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