

REPORT TO: CORPORATE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 9TH JUNE

REPORT OF: CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES COMMISSIONING AND
GOVERNANCE AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CITIZEN FOCUS AND
ENGAGEMENT

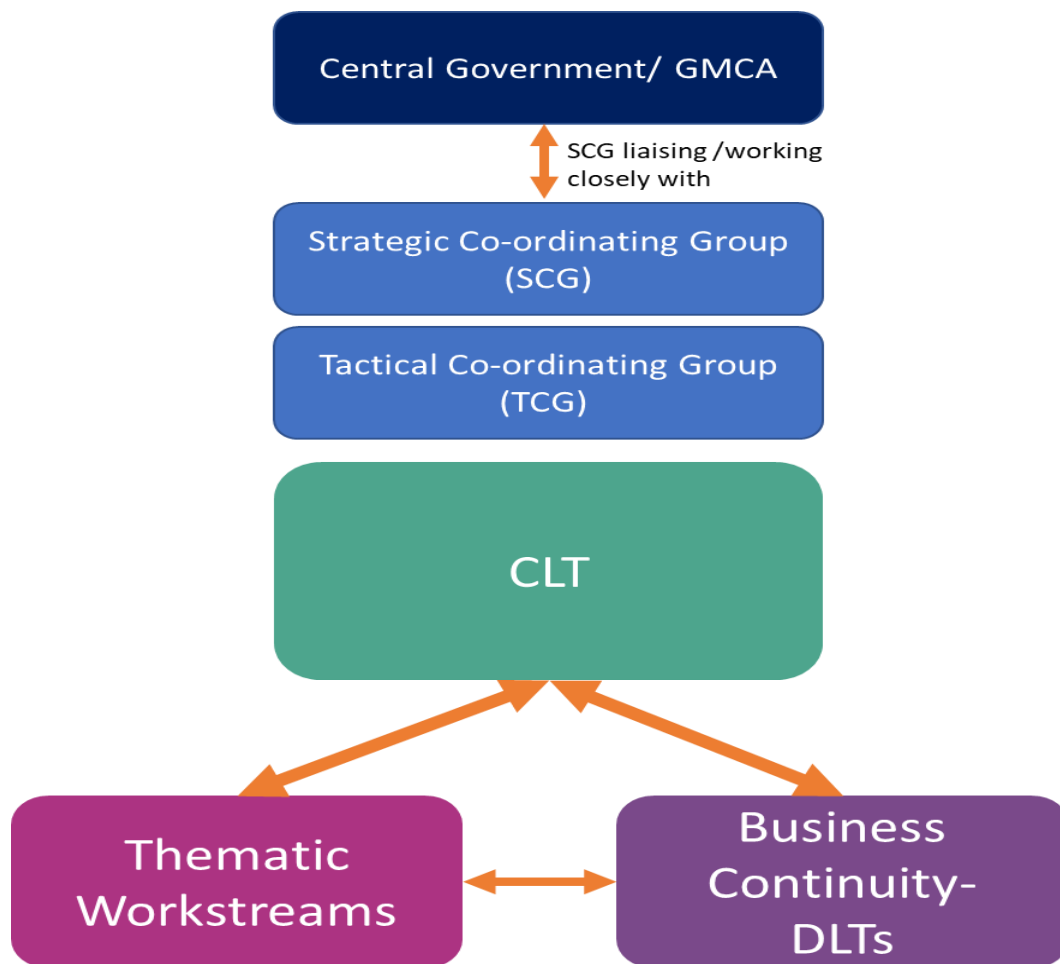
REPORT TITLE: RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The spread of coronavirus, declared a global public health emergency, has created unprecedented circumstances within which the Council, working with our communities and partners, have had to respond.
- 1.2 Whilst an understandably difficult period for many living and working within Stockport, we have also witnessed an incredible and inspiring outpouring of neighbourliness and community spirit.
- 1.3 This report provides an overview of the Council's response to date, building on regular updates received directly by members and including detail relating to the remit of this committee, and a view of how this response will be developing over the coming weeks and months.

2.0 Responding to COVID-19: Council approach

- 2.1 The Council has established a robust and responsive governance to facilitate cross partnership and organisational response. This has included close working with Government and Greater Manchester:



Responded to Government guidance and advice

2.2 The Council's responses have been very much guided by advice and guidance provided by Central Government and the Corporate Leadership Team have reviewed guidance and announcements daily throughout this period. The specific relevant published guidance in terms of the remit of this Committee has included:

- Coronavirus Act 2020
- Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020
- Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020
- Health Services Control of Patient Information Regulations 2002

Guidance - general

- New Shielding Programme Announced
- Updated Information Sharing Notices
- NHS Volunteer Responders
- Remote Committee Meetings Regulations
- Postponement of By-Elections
- MHCLG Review of Regular Statistical Collections
- New Shielding Regional Team and Essential Food Delivery Update
- DEFRA Guidance on Accessing Food and Essential Supplies
- Information provided to local authorities on risks around the gypsy and traveller communities

- Rough Sleeping Taskforce Created

Guidance - Financial

- Statutory Audit Timescales
- Small Business Grants Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund Guidance
- European Structural and Investment Fund Q&A Update
- Local Authority Funding Allocations
- Discretionary Grant Scheme
- Business Rates Re-evaluation Postponement
- Discretionary Grant Scheme Guidance

Provided robust and responsive communications

2.3 Clear and responsive communications have been fundamental throughout the Council's response. This has included:

- Boroughwide public communications, sharing public health messages, information about support and celebrating local businesses and organisations;
- Targeted communications for those who are shielding or vulnerable;
- Daily members e-brief
- Daily all colleague e-briefings
- Regular forums (2/3 times a week) with Partners including: Schools, Businesses, VCSE, Food Banks

Redesigned service provision

2.4 The organisation has made a number of changes to provision in response to Covid-19, this has included changing the way some services are delivered and, in some instances, temporarily suspending some services. This has included:

- Closure of public facing buildings (e.g. libraries, registrars)
- Virtual formal meetings;
- Face to face assessments and reviews moved to video/ teleconferencing or
- Temporary suspension of services, schemes and projects (e.g. registrations of births and marriages, Apprenticeships, Bed every Night Project)
- Early years, schools and post-16 setting closures
- Reduction in waste collection, suspension of park maintenance services, closure of public outdoor sport facilities

Introduced new service provision

2.5 Alongside service changes a series of new services have also been introduced. This has included:

- Stockport Economic Resilience Forum, including: Stockport Jobs Match service, SK Business Recovery website, New Business Grant scheme and daily update newsletter with advice and information about Covid-19 and responses to support businesses
- Stockport Support Hub, including: coronavirus helpline; New services for food, shopping, medicines, driving support, PPE distribution, social contact

- Door step / phone check-ins with those adults and children in receipt of care / additional support (e.g. EHCs, over 70s with assisted bin collection) and those on national shielded list
- New pathways and revised services via MASSH including: new emotional wellbeing hub which includes daily triage and allocation of appropriate support for children and young people; revised early support offer with daily triage
- Hardship Grant to supplement Council Tax Support (unallocated funds will be used for additional discretionary payments for Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and support funds)
- New hotel and temporary provision to accommodate rough sleepers
- Coordination of childcare for vulnerable children and children of key workers

3.0 Responding to Covid-19: Thematic approach

3.1 The key programmes of work in the Covid-19 response have been:

- Humanitarian Aid
- Voluntary and Community Response
- Food
- Workforce
- Mortality Management
- Finance
- Out of Hospital Support – Adults and Disability and PPE
- Contact Testing and Tracing
- Children and Education
- Economic Resilience

A summary of scrutiny responsibilities for the Council's Coronavirus response can be found in **Appendix 1**.

3.2 An overview of the activity, progress and impact to date in relation to the programmes and services relevant to this Committee is set out below.

Workstream	Humanitarian Aid
<p>Ensuring humanitarian aid and support for vulnerable people has been key to our response for Covid-19. We recognised that many people, especially those without a network of family and friends may need support particularly those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are over the age of 70 and self-isolating • received a letter from the NHS advising they are at high risk and should stay at home • are medically vulnerable according to the government criteria and should stay at home • are any age and self-isolating due to illness • experiencing financial hardship or food poverty <p>In response, Stockport Council set up a Coronavirus helpline which is available 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and 10am-4pm on Saturdays and Bank Holidays. In addition to this, proactive outbound calls have been made to those who have been identified by the NHS as medically high risk and are known to our services or have registered for a national support but need wider help to address care needs or dietary requirements.</p> <p>The Council has also been working in partnership with GM Fire and Rescue Service and GM Police to utilise the support of their staff to make outbound calls to vulnerable people</p>	

aged over 70 that have been identified through data and intelligence. So far over 1000 calls have been undertaken.

To support these requests, several offers of support have been established working with our Partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector. These include:

- Food Access (working with food banks, Stockport Homes and Pure Innovations)
- Befriending service (working with The Targeted Prevention Alliance)
- Medicines deliveries (working with Stockport CCG and volunteer drivers)
- Financial inclusion support (working with the Citizen's Advice Bureau)
- Digital Inclusion (working with Starting Point)
- Mental health support
- Homelessness
- Deployment of driving resource

Since the helpline began at the end of March a total of 3,814 calls have been received into the helpline and 1,294 outbound calls have been made. This work has resulted in a total of 5,108 referrals for help and support. The largest number (1,805) have been for access to food and shopping support.

Workstream Food

A Stockport Food Task Group was established in March to co-ordinate the initial work programme and has continued to meet weekly, complimented by a foodbank/ Pantry weekly call to ensure we are providing them with the support they need to meet demand.

The food work stream has 3 components:

Finding out who we need to provide for and what they need – Understanding our DEMAND

- We have taken a cohort approach to identify where our need lies, understanding and mapping needs with a focus on those in food poverty, those on Free School Meals provision and proactively contacting the shielded cohort and other vulnerable groups.
- Working with Stockport Homes we scaled-up the existing 'Your Local Pantry' offer in order to provide emergency food parcels for a maximum of two-weeks to those without immediate access to food or without financial means to purchase food.
- Working with Pure Innovations and wider VCSE partners we have provided a shopping offer to those who are unable to leave home to shop for food by matching people with a volunteer shopper.
- Both offers are accessed via the Coronavirus helpline which has referred over 1,100 households for emergency food parcels, along with a further 783 referrals for shopping support.

Sourcing food from a range of suppliers and sources – Developing our SUPPLY

- We have mapped our food supply networks and worked with the local restaurant sector, wholesalers and school meal providers to identify and redistribute surplus food.
- We are receiving regular donations from major local businesses including Allied Bakeries who have donated more than 4,000 loaves of bread since lockdown.

Making sure food is stored securely and gets to the right people as effectively as possible – DISTRIBUTION

- The Town Hall acted as an initial hub for the redistribution of 100 Government

food parcels for residents that are medically shielding before these were delivered directly from central government

- Our approach has been to work and enhance existing provision rather than setting up a new centre
- Food banks are increasingly able to manage their own distribution having mobilised additional volunteers and seen demand plateau and donations (both financial and of food rise following an initial decline).
- We have invested through the Stockport Local Fund in 27 community or Covid-19 mutual aid groups who have supported food distribution in their local area.
- We have linked up with schools to ensure vulnerable families are supported. Around 77 schools have signed up to the DfE voucher scheme to support children and young people who are eligible for free school meals through the benefits system. Other schools have set up alternative voucher schemes (directly with shops or with a provider) or via food parcels and packed lunches from the schools' caterer, and approx 1650 food boxes have been distributed via schools.

Workstream	Workforce
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Our workforce has risen to the challenge of Covid-19 and demonstrated their vital importance, working hard to support our residents. We have delivered culture change at pace and scale to enable home working and the use of digital solutions. The workforce has visibly lived and truly demonstrated the Council values in their approach and application to delivering during the crisis. Teams have come together, built new relationships and supported each other with a shared common purpose. Working in a flexible, agile way has been key and everyone has worked hard to manage work life balance, with significant wellbeing support regularly provided to the workforce.

A Workforce Steering Group has been put in place with senior officers from each directorate to respond quickly and support services. This reports into a system Workforce group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive with Senior Officers for the Council, CCG and Foundation Trust to ensure a joint approach to workforce issues, share good practice and consider deployment across the system where issues emerge. Trade Union engagement has also been key, with twice weekly calls to understand, manage, and resolve emerging issues quickly.

A range of activity has been undertaken to support the workforce at this time.

Staff deployment:

We have undertaken a skills audit across the Council to support staff deployment to key roles. An internal bureau has been established to support redeployment and staff have been redeployed to key roles. For example, libraries staff are supporting the Covid-19 helpline and museums staff have been managing volunteers and helping residents with shopping.

Recruitment:

We have taken a range of action to support priority recruitment at this time to secure additional workers in key roles including approached ex-employees to return and participating in several campaigns.

Management Information:

We are producing a set of new reports on a daily basis to ensure Senior Managers have accurate data to facilitate workforce planning

Wellbeing:

We have been supporting the workforce during a time of stress through tools, resources, coaching and counselling.

- Twice weekly “Supporting our wellbeing” messages are being sent to all colleagues.
- Workforce Development Team have undertaken “welfare calls” to employees to provide support and offer a safe place to chat through issues.
- We have also produced a toolkit for managers to help them with supporting employees in the new working arrangements.
- A range of support is available for colleagues through our assistance programme including counselling for those struggling with bereavement, one to one coaching and signposting to wider mental health support.

Digital and working from home:

We have moved to home working at pace and scale. Colleagues have been supported through support documents, training and webinars on the use of digital tools.

Policy Changes

We have made changes to some of our key policies to make sure that people are supported in this time:

- The Flexi scheme has been amended to allow people to work at any time to enable them support childcare and the number of hours allowed to carry forward has been increased to reflect the long hours worked by many people.
- We are continuing to pay casual workers who had been working regularly for the Council to ensure that there is not a loss of income for individuals that will result in increased hardship. These workers have often been redeployed to undertake different roles.
- Annual leave will be able to be taken over a two-year period from 1 April 2020.
- Given the exceptional circumstances, Covid-19 sickness will not be counted towards sickness absence triggers.

Workstream Finance

Financial Impact

The Council's 2020/21 Budget and MTFP approved in February have clearly now been superseded by the Covid-19 pandemic. The financial challenge presented by the impact of Covid-19 is unprecedented. As part of the Covid-19 financial impact returns to Government, the Council's current estimate of the financial impact (cost and loss of income) is circa £46.8m adverse financial impact. To date the Council has received £16.3m of Covid-19 impact grant support from Government. Whilst the Government's support funding is welcomed, this leaves the Council with a potential funding gap of circa £30.5m in 2020/21, with the permanent impact on the Council's MTFP being assessed.

Government has yet to announce what additional support will be given to Local Authorities to bridge this funding gap and what form this will take. However, following recent Government announcements there is an indication that the expectation is the financial burden of Covid-19 will be shared with Local Authorities.

Business Grants and Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund

Government funding of £66.574m was paid to the Council in early April to passport to eligible businesses as defined by the Government's Covid-19 business grant payments scheme. As of 1st June, we have issued 4,953 business grants totalling £56.480m. This equates to 87% of all Stockport businesses that have been identified as eligible for these grants.

The Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund was announced by Government on 1 May, with guidance issued to Local Authorities on 13 May and 22 May. It aims to support those small and micro businesses which missed out on other Covid-19 business grant support to businesses and prioritises those with relatively high on-going property costs and significant loss of income in shared spaces, although the individual Local Authority schemes are broadly at the discretion of each Local Authority.

Stockport has been awarded £3.241m to cover this scheme; funded from the expected surplus of the main business grants schemes once all eligible businesses have been paid (detailed above) of £1.764m and additional funding of £1.477m. The Council launched its guidance in relation to the first phase of its scheme on 18 May which follows the suggested priorities in the guidelines and aims to support initially those who can demonstrate the greatest need. As such the first phase has a de-minimis property cost level of £250 per month and will need to be supported by evidence of these costs and loss of income. It may be that in any subsequent phases other businesses will be eligible.

There are five grant levels: £2,500, £5,000, £7,500, £10,000 and £25,000. It is anticipated that most grants will be below £10,000 and the £25,000 grant will only be awarded in very exceptional circumstances. The level of grant will be determined on a case-by-case basis during a short application window and may be subject to change depending on whether the scheme is over-subscribed. It is anticipated that the first awards will be made no earlier than 5 June.

Assistance to Adult Social Care (ASC) Providers

The financial assistance to Adult Social Care providers is taking a systematic approach, including the self-funder market, alongside support the Council is giving to providers caring for ASC clients. A Covid-19 funding panel has been created to assess provider requests with regards to additional costs incurred due to Covid-19. To date £0.7m has been agreed through this process. In addition, homecare providers are separately submitting claims for care which was planned but unable to be delivered due to Covid-19. Support is also being provided to clients in receipt of direct payments affected by Covid-19.

The Council has also offered financial support to care home providers in the borough up to 90% occupancy, this is to provide further financial support to providers due to the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Further to this the Council will also be providing care homes with their Infection Control Grant allocation out of the £3.1m the Council has received from the £600m national funding.

Financial Inclusion

Since lockdown began a range of Council services (Housing, Rev and Bens, Growth ASC and CYP) have been working in partnership with the CAB, Credit Union and Food Banks to support the financial resilience of our communities. We have monitored the impact of lockdown on our communities, the changing demand on our frontline services, and worked to implement immediate enhancements to our current offer.

A survey of private landlords was undertaken showing the extent to which private renters were already experiencing rent arrears and DWP data shows JSA and UC claimants increased by 3,545 in Stockport last month taking the total claimant count for the borough to 8,775.

The Emergency Food offer enacted under the Food workstream, the delayed roll out of Support Funds replacing SLAs and an enhanced loan offer through the Credit Union, and the local advice and guidance offer have provided immediate support to those who need it.

Our focus going forward is on developing a strong self-service offer building on Better Off, and supported by a clear communications campaign, to support those newly experiencing a loss or reduction in income to proactively respond to their change in circumstances and reduce the risk of falling into financial crisis.

Local Government Funding Reform Delays

The Government's future direction for Local Authority funding remains uncertain and is now subject to Government completing a multi-year spending review and completion of the reforms linked to the Fairer Funding Formula and Business Rates Retention, both of which will determine the distribution of national funding to Local Authorities going forward. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic these reforms were expected to impact on the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22, but Government has since confirmed these reforms will be further delayed to allow Local Authorities to focus on the immediate public health challenges posed by the pandemic. Whilst welcomed to allow Covid-19 recovery plans to be implemented, further delay presents the Council with further uncertainty about its future funding and what this means for Local Government funding going forward.

Business Rates Revaluation Delay

A national revaluation of businesses rateable values was due to take place in 2021 following a change in legislation prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the economic impact of the pandemic, the Government have decided to delay this process and the revaluation will no longer take place in 2021 to provide business with greater certainty. The Government are continuing to work on 'the fundamental review of Business Rates', which was announced in their Budget in March 2020, and some commentators suggest this will now be open to a much wider range of options including replacing Business Rates with an alternative business tax.

Procurement Policy Note (PPN 0220) Supplier Support

The Government issued PPN0220 in March setting out information and guidance for public bodies on payment of their suppliers to ensure service continuity during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. In response to the guidance the Council issued a letter to all its suppliers/providers providing assurance of the Council's continued support during the pandemic and confirming business continuity in terms of prompt payment of invoices to provide suppliers/providers with some certainty about their cash flows.

In line with the guidance, the Council has also made available (upon request) additional support to suppliers considered to be critical and/or at risk in terms of the Council's business continuity and supplier retention. An assessment of the suppliers/providers has been made on a case-by-case basis to ensure the additional support provided is appropriate. This has included moving suppliers to immediate payment terms, removing the need for purchase order matching where invoice amounts are below £1000 and consideration of advance payment of invoices where appropriate.

Workstream Mortality Management

The bereavement cycle is being monitored closely at a local and regional level to help with planning for an effective and sustainable response to Covid-19 deaths across GM. This includes regular reporting and analysis to enhance understanding and

forecast future capacity.

Workstream **Communications**

A comprehensive communications strategy has been developed. The Council's communications activity aims to support the following objectives:

- Signpost residents and other stakeholders such as partners and local business to the advice and guidance from Public Health England, the government and the NHS on how to protect yourself and others from spreading Covid-19.
- Ensure the effective and consistent use of all council communications channels to provide practical advice and support to residents, partners and businesses so they know how, where and when to access help and support if they need it
- Help residents, partners and businesses understand what the Council is doing to keep vital frontline services going, to protect the most vulnerable, and the role communities can play to help the council in this work
- Ensure all employees and Members are effectively supported with frequent, clear and consistent communications and updates

Overall engagement with communications through the Council's social media accounts has been steadily increasing throughout the Covid-19 crisis. As an illustration, below is a comparison of average engagement figures across social media channels in February with figures for the week of 18th May 2020.

	Average for February 2020	w/c 18 th May 2020
New followers	183	399
Post reach (cumulative numbers of views of social media posts)	248,272	312,115
Engagements (comments, likes, shares etc)	14,040	40,432

Work Area **Democratic Governance**

On 16 March 2020 the Prime Minister announced measures to combat the spread of Covid-19 which included to stop non-essential contact and unnecessary contact with other people. On 22 March 2020 the Prime Minister further advised that everyone had to follow social distancing recommendations and to stay 2 meters apart. The guidance on 16 and 22 March 2020 meant that committee meetings would be unable to be held in accordance with social distancing guidelines until legislation came into force to allow remote virtual committee meetings (this came into force on 4 April 2020).

Accordingly, on 24 March 2020 the Leader, by giving notice to the Proper Officer, made a temporary amendment to the Leader's Executive Scheme of Delegation so that all decisions that would ordinarily require a Cabinet decision could be delegated to an Individual Cabinet Member in consultation with the relevant Corporate Leader and Chair of the relevant committee and by giving notice to Group Leaders and the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Furthermore on 24 March 2020 the Monitoring Officer advised the Corporate Leadership Team and Group Leaders that the Urgent Action provision contained in the Constitution could be utilised by the relevant Corporate Director in consultation with the Chair of the

relevant committee to undertake urgent non-executive and non-key decisions such as planning and licensing decisions. Accordingly, planning and licensing decisions have been taken by the Corporate Director in consultation with the Chair of the relevant committees.

No committee meetings took place in March following the Cabinet meeting on 17 March 2020 due to the Government advice provided on 16 and 22 March 2020.

The first remote virtual meeting will be the Annual Council Meeting on 26 May 2020. It is envisaged that the business programme will then continue by way of virtual meetings for as long as is necessary.

Work Area	Digital
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Systems and technical platforms developed to support remote working

Internet proxy service replacement. A brand-new new proxy service has been built and deployed more than trebling our capacity to process internet bound data traffic securely, by controlling undesirable content, viruses and malware.

Direct Access VPN. Our Virtual Private Network service, Direct Access (DA) provides a secure connection into the Council's network for staff working remotely and using a standard internet connection. The service was originally scaled to meet the day to day normal demand for approximately 200 concurrent remote users. Working from home necessitated by Covid-19 increased the demand for DA remote connectivity from 200 to up to 2000 concurrent connections. To facilitate this increase in demand we have increased the DA server count from 2 to 5 and significantly increased the resource capacity in each of the servers. We are also currently running a project to fully upgrade the entire VPN service to the latest technology which incorporates features designed to help improve the quality of service for cloud-based applications such as Microsoft Teams. The planned 'go live' for this new service is around the end of June.

RDS. The Council's Remote Desk Top Service (RDS) connects remote workers securely to specific systems which are resident in the Council's data centre. Due to its extremely efficient data access methods it is particularly useful in providing connectivity to very large systems and databases such as SAP. To meet the increase in demand we have increased the size of the RDS server farm from 12 to 32 servers and doubled the memory and CPU capacity across the board.

Internet Bandwidth. Remote working is increasing the volume of internet traffic coming in and out of the Council's network. Work is ongoing to double the Council's internet bandwidth from 1Gb to 2Gbs. The increase in bandwidth is expected to go live in the next 2 weeks.

Remote end user monitoring. With a new widely distributed work force connecting in from homes and remote locations across the region our existing, council network focused, monitoring and altering technologies are no longer adequate. In order to understand end-users connectivity issues and service disruptions for remote staff we need to be able to monitor the full end to end connection from the laptop on the kitchen table all the way back to the Council's data centre. We are currently building a large-scale pilot of an end to end monitoring system in order to facilitate that requirement. Live data will be available to IT support in the next 1 to 2 weeks.

Digital services and ways of working

The Council has launched a number of new digital services in response to emerging areas of need and demand, including:

- Introduction of new e-forms – aided by the development of a new in house eform builder to enable forms to be built more quickly and inline with Council style and accessibility guidance;
- Virtual meetings – supporting the set-up and transfer to virtual/ remote meetings;
- Digital skills – providing a range of training, information, advice and guidance to support colleagues as they worked with new tools/hardware/digital practices;
- Introduced new adult social care case management system – whilst underway prior to Covid-19, the roll-out and training of LiquidLogic was undertaken virtually and at pace to enable social workers to respond to remote working.

Digital Inclusion

Since before the Digital Inclusion Alliance was created 2 years ago we have recognised that digital exclusion is closely tied to social exclusion.

During the pandemic it's estimated that 1 in 5 adults cannot access essential online services like buying food, banking and connecting with family, nor can they access information on staying safe and managing their health conditions. Those without digital equipment and the skills to use them have had their channels and voices closed meaning those who need help the most cannot shield effectively; of the 1 million letters sent out nationally to people in the 'shielded' category, around 200,000 could not access the links to information contained in the letter.

In response we have:

- Distributed devices to Care Homes to enable people to stay in touch with family and friends.
- Included basic tutorials on stockport.gov.uk and are promoting the DfE's Skills Toolkit and Good Things Foundation's Learn My Way and Make it Click free online training.
- Mobilised our volunteer digital champions who usually provide face to face support in the community to instead provide it over the phone, via zoom and through screen sharing.
- We've worked with Starting Point to create and promote a digital helpline that is supporting individuals such as those in care homes to connect to loved ones and also training community organisations in how to use video conferencing tools so they can continue to support their clients during lockdown. Examples: enabling a church to reach its congregation, Stockport Advocacy to reach families with SEND and providing a lifeline to carers through Signpost For Carers.
- Working with DevicesDotNow to identify and distribute devices, data and support to people like Mable who were increasingly cut off – watch her story here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLSYeLAz7Vw&feature=youtu.be>

3.3 Given the pace of the Covid-19 response, a verbal update will be provided at the meeting regarding any developments following the publication of this report.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 We are working hard with colleagues and partners both locally and across Greater Manchester to ensure that we can “build back better” and make Stockport even

stronger in the future. Across Stockport people came together during the crisis and it will be important that we stay together to support recovery.

4.2 With regards to the areas within this committee's responsibility, recovery plans will be shared with the committee as they develop. A summary of the next phase of recovery is included below for each workstream.

Workstream	Humanitarian Aid
Although the demand for humanitarian aid is reducing it is important to continue this support for vulnerable residents particularly as work on contact tracing steps up and more people may be required to go into isolation. We also recognise that there will be an even greater focus on financial inclusion as supportive measures like the Furlough scheme come to an end.	
Workstream	Food
<p>Going forward we will develop a longer 'food plan' for each of the cohorts identified food needs. We are working with the Pantry and Foodbanks to develop a longer-term plan for emergency food that can be sustained as the enhanced Pantry offer (operated by redeployed SHG staff) is scaled back.</p> <p>We are working with our foodbank network to identify and secure additional resources to complement the local investments made to date and allow them to diversify their offer to meet the needs both of those who are isolating but also those who may be newly experiencing food poverty.</p> <p>This work will be linked with our wider work on Financial Resilience.</p>	
Workstream	Workforce
<p>As we move into the recovery phase it feels more important than ever to have an organisational approach to our workforce. We have a unique window of opportunity to build on the learning and culture change already achieved in order to ensure we can come back stronger than ever and support people to work in the "new normal"</p> <p>We are putting the workforce at the heart of this approach and have launched an engagement programme called "Let's talk" to get people's views into the future. A series of engagement surveys are covering key themes such as wellbeing, flexible working and digital.</p>	
Workstream	Finance
<p>The Finance Team is progressing a programme of work as part of the MTFP Summer Review and monthly iterations of the Government's Covid-19 financial impact return. The following reviews and impact mitigations are being completed/considered as part of this work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early budget monitoring and forecasting of the 2020/21 outturn position to identify any surpluses (for example where services have temporally ceased due to Covid-19 and expected costs are not being incurred) as well as costs that have not been captured on the Covid-19 cost codes setup in the financial ledger; • Review of the Council's useable reserves (including earmarked reserves) to identify revenue resources which are available for realignment as part of the 2020/21 Reserves Policy to support the funding of the Covid-19 impact; • Review of the Council's earmarked reserves which have been set aside to fund revenue contributions to capital schemes and considering switching to other forms 	

of capital funding (i.e. borrowing) to free up the revenue resources to bolster the Council's available earmarked reserves to support the funding of the Covid-19 impact;

- Review of the Council's Capital Programme to consider rephrasing of capital schemes and reduce the revenue costs of the schemes;
- Review of the possible use of available capital receipts to support transformation projects that revenue resources (budgeted and/or held in earmarked reserves) have been set aside to fund. Using available capital receipts in this way will free up revenue resources to support the funding of the Covid-19 impact; and
- Review of the Council's MTFP to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's savings requirement across the medium-term period.

This programme of work will assess the extent to which the financial impact of Covid-19 can be mitigated by the Council, without further Government support, in the short term to ensure it is able to respond to the pandemic and recover to continue to deliver services to our residents. Considerations are obviously also being given to the delay of investment plans and projects as well as spending controls, particularly for discretionary spend (i.e. spend not linked to the Council's legal requirements or statutory duties). There is obviously an opportunity cost of doing this in terms of the impact it would have on the schemes and the benefits they were expected to bring to Stockport. In addition, the Council remains hopeful that (and is actively lobbying for) confirmation of additional Government support funding will be announced.

As well as the above, the Finance Team will continue to analyse budgets during the year to identify the underlying budget pressures and mitigate the impact of the volatility and uncertainty. This will include the 2020/21 MTFP Summer Review, the 2020/21 Reserves Policy and further development of the Council's Capital Strategy and Capital Programme. The continuation of this strong financial management foundation will be more important than ever to enable the Council to have confidence in its financial resilience to recover and continue to deliver essential services to Stockport residents.

Workstream **Communications**

The Council's communications approach will continue to evolve and respond to developing national messaging, including:

- No longer using the original "stay at home" messaging and government straplines
- Signposting the latest government and PHE guidance;
- Continued emphasis on working closely with partners and communities to share and develop together "living with Covid" and "building back better" plans

Work Area **Digital**

Technical Infrastructure

Further work to stabilise the Council's infrastructure, including exploring opportunities to ensure further improvements to working from home from direct access, hardware and software, and working with system providers to improve performance, user experience and resilience.

Digital Services

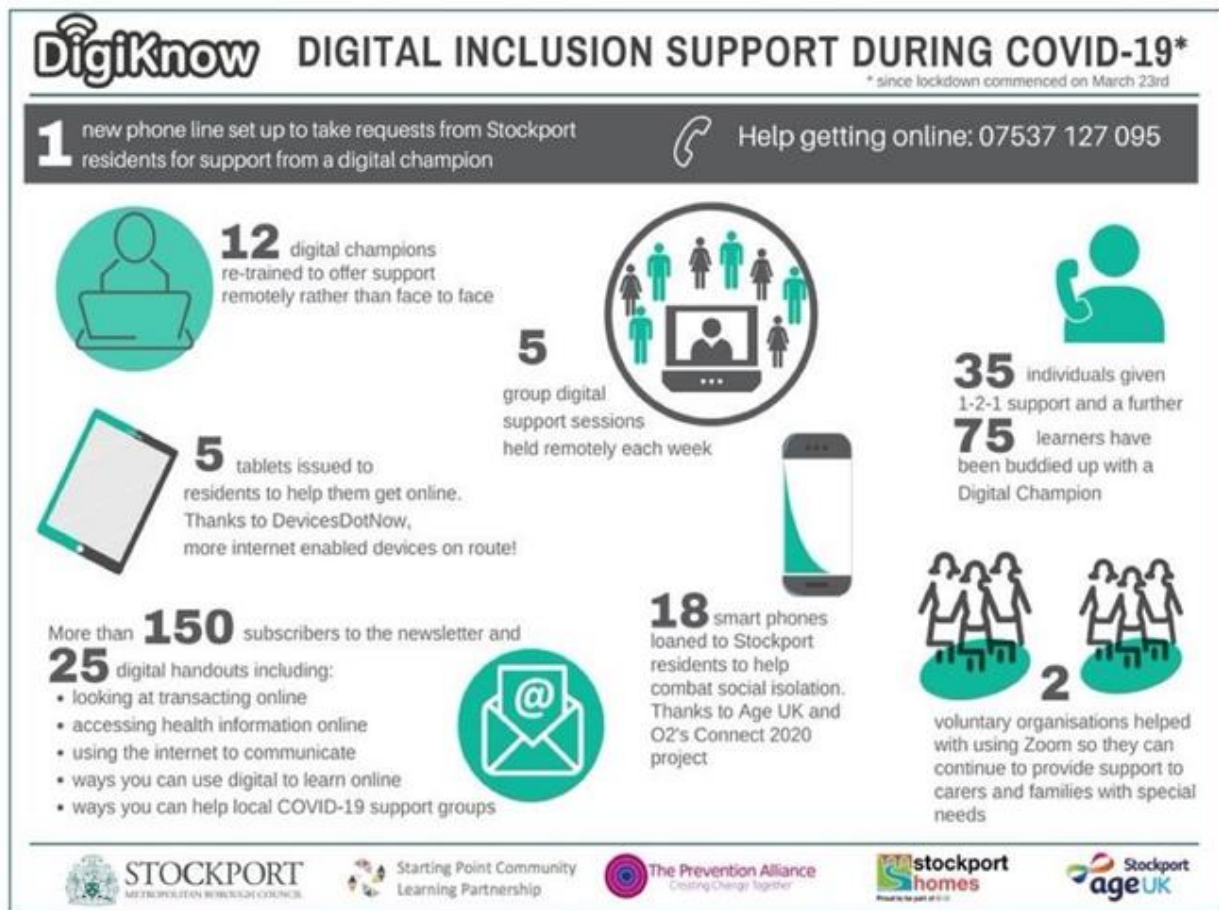
As part of wider organisational recovery and future planning focus will now move to support further automation or digital service access where this is appropriate and supports safe access to services for citizens and businesses.

Digital Inclusion

Further impact is likely to come as we see lockdown measures eased. If we rely on the

contact tracing app to keep the R factor down this requires a smart phone and access to data that 1/5 of the population do not have.

Before this pandemic struck people were able to opt out of digital. Other channels of communication and help were available locally through their library, they could pop into the shops, their bank or Fred Perry reception and they could meet face to face with neighbours, family and friends for information. That choice has been removed and digital access is now an essential just like any other utility. As we come out of lockdown there will be a window of opportunity while this motivation to use digital is still strong. The infographic below captures our work during the first month of lock down. An updated infographic coving our response including May will be available in the following weeks.



4.3 A further update on the Council's recovery planning approach will be brought to a future scrutiny committee.

5.0 Looking ahead to recovery

5.1 As described above Council, communities and partners are currently transitioning from the immediate crisis response to a phased easing of lockdown and living with Covid-19. Given this the Council is developing next phase plans across key strands of work identified above, alongside new areas of focus.

5.2 Whilst this has understandably been a difficult time for many of those who live or work in Stockport, as we progress and develop our recovery plans it is more important than ever to ensure that the passion and commitment demonstrated alongside the relationships, trust and mutual respect that have been forged during

this unprecedented period from across our communities, businesses, workforce and public services are nurtured.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 As outlined in section four the Council is now moving its focus to preparing for the next phases of its response, both living with coronavirus and building back better. We are committed to doing this in collaboration with our communities, businesses, elected members, trade unions and partners through existing forums established but also opening conversations and through testing ideas together.

6.2 The Scrutiny Committee are invited to:

- Discuss and note this report and the response to date;
- Note the commitment to return to Scrutiny with information about future phases of response.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Kathryn Rees on telephone number 07989208640 or alternatively email on kathryn.rees@stockport.gov.uk

Appendix.1 – Overview of response and scrutiny responsibility

Theme	Communities and Housing	Corporate Resource Management and Governance	Children and Young People	Economy and Regeneration	Adult Social Care and Health
	Mon 8 June	Tues 9 June	Weds 10 June	Thurs 11 June	Thurs 11 June
Humanitarian Aid	X	X			
Voluntary and Community Response	X				
Food		X			
Workforce		X			
Mortality Management		X			
Finance		X			
Out of Hospital Support – Adults and Disability and PPE					X
Contact Testing and Tracing					X
Children and Education			X		
Economic Resilience				X	