

## **Cabinet**

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**Date of Meeting:** 7 July 2020

**Report Title:** Covid-19 – Update on Response and Recovery

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Sam Corcoran - Leader of the Council

Cllr Craig Browne - Deputy Leader of the Council

**Senior Officer:** Lorraine O'Donnell - Chief Executive

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. In June, Cabinet received a report regarding how the Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2. This report provides an update of the work that has been undertaken in response to this national and international public health emergency.
- 1.3. In addition, the report provides an update on the projected financial impact this will have on the Council.
- 1.4. Furthermore, this report outlines the work undertaken to support communities and businesses in the Borough as Government directed restrictions are being lifted and the plans the council is developing to support longer-term recovery from the pandemic.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1. That Cabinet:**

- 2.1.1. Note the issues outlined in this report.
- 2.1.2. Note the financial implications of COVID-19 to date and the ongoing lobbying to press for the Government to fund the total financial impact of the pandemic on Cheshire East Council.
- 2.1.3. Note that a detailed report on the financial impact on the agreed budget for 2020/21 will be presented to a forthcoming Cabinet meeting.
- 2.1.4. Note the content of the Outbreak Plan for Cheshire East that was published on 30<sup>th</sup> June on the Council's website.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1. This report provides Members with a summary of the Council's response to date relating to the pandemic and its plans for recovery.
- 3.2. The report also provides Members with an updated summary on the projected financial impact that COVID-19 will have on the Council and the actions required to align the Council's Budget to match recent changes in funding associated with the COVID-19 response.

## **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. Not applicable.

## **5. Background**

- 5.1. At its meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> June, Cabinet received a report regarding the Council's Response to the COVID-19 pandemic which provided a background to the coronavirus, the initial outbreak and the spread of the virus.
- 5.2. As at 21<sup>st</sup> June 2020, 216 countries/territories have been affected; there were 8,708,008 confirmed cases globally; and 461,715 confirmed deaths. (Source WHO)
- 5.3. In the UK, as at 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020, there were 304,331 confirmed cases and 42,632 confirmed deaths. In Cheshire East there were 1,332 confirmed cases and 462 registered deaths. (Source GOV.UK)

5.4. The daily confirmed case rate has continued to fall. The contingency plans that have been put in place across all public services including health and social care have enabled essential services to be able to continue throughout the period of this pandemic to date.

5.5. The latest international, national and local statistics are available from the following data dashboards:

5.5.1. <https://covid19.who.int/>

5.5.2. <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

5.5.3. <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/covid-19-case-tracker>

## 6. **Response**

### 6.1. **Sub-regional**

6.1.1. The sub-regional response continues to be led by the Cheshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF), which includes Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington Councils, Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue, Public Health England and the NHS.

6.1.2. The Council is a major LRF partner and has played a significant role at all levels of response – participating in the strategic coordinating groups (SCG) and tactical coordinating groups (TCG) and resourcing all the multi-agency support cells established to manage the sub-regional response to the pandemic.

### 6.2. **Council Response**

6.2.1. Cheshire East Council continues to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. At the same time the Council has continued to:

- deliver essential local services
- protect our most vulnerable children, families and people
- support our communities and local businesses

6.2.2. The response phase is likely to continue for some time to come. In addition, the Council is planning for potential second waves of the pandemic and/or localised outbreaks. A summary of the actions that have continued to be delivered during the response since the last Cabinet meeting is provided below.

- 6.2.3. *Communities*- The People Helping People service has continued to provide vulnerable residents who do not have support networks available to them. To date we have had 1,369 volunteers recruited and 3,597 families and individuals have been supported. The People Helping People service is now looking at how we can support the individuals who have been shielding to help them to reconnect to their local communities.
- 6.2.4. *Adult Social Care*- Adult Social Care has been maintaining contact with all service users supporting their safety and wellbeing. The team have not had to enact any 'Care Act' easements. The hospital social work teams have continued to support hospital discharges and continue to see transfers of care operate very effectively. The social work team have also been supporting the individuals on the shielding patients list. A huge effort has been undertaken to support the adult social care market and, the care home sector. Following approval by Cabinet in June, payments have now been made to social care providers which has supported the longer-term resilience in the social care market. In addition to this all payments have been made to the care homes in relation to the infection prevention control fund.
- 6.2.5. *Shielding*- As part of the Government's response to shielding those people most at risk of need of hospital treatment if they catch Coronavirus and who have been asked to stay at home for at least 12 weeks, the Council set up a Community Shielding Hub and Distribution Centre. The Hub has engaged with over 3,105 residents and issued in excess of 270 emergency parcels of food and toiletries. Local companies and supermarkets have contributed through providing supplies which have been greatly appreciated. The Government has announced that the national shielding arrangements will cease as outlined in 6.2.3. above, the People Helping People service will support these individuals as lock down is eased.
- 6.2.6. *Children's Services*- Children's services have continued to operate to ensure our children and families are supported during this time and to ensure that children are effectively safeguarded and supported. Guidance has been changing rapidly, and services have needed to be responsive and flexible, working closely and supportively with our partners to implement changes.
- 6.2.7. *Children's Social Care*- All children open to Children's Social Care are receiving face to face visits unless it is not safe to do so, e.g. due to shielding. Face to face family time for cared for children is being cautiously reintroduced; this is taking place outdoors and is being individually risk assessed. To enable safe working practices, frontline teams will be working from offices in 'bubbles' for one day a week to support effective management oversight of practice. The Council is also exploring how Child Protection Conferences can take place with some people attending in person, for

example the Chair and family members, and all other attendees continuing to attend virtually, to support better engagement with families. This is just the beginning of planning with the aim to expand opportunities for children and parents to meet face to face. This will be prioritised depending on the vulnerability and complexity of individual children's and parents' circumstances.

- 6.2.8. Staff are working with the courts to progress effective court hearings. Despite the revised arrangements for courts, children and young people within the court process will experience significant delays, which will also impact on demand and costs to services. The number of cared for children is likely to increase over the next few months.
- 6.2.9. Short break services for parents of children with disabilities were suspended due to the significant risk of infection to this group. However, the council is working with short break commissioned providers, the Parent Carer Forum, and other local organisations to reintroduce an increased short breaks offer over the summer period to offer respite for families.
- 6.2.10. Families have coped exceptionally well during this time. However, lockdown has been a challenging time for some, and will have allowed issues to remain hidden, preventing early identification and prevention. An increase in the seriousness of harm being caused within families already known to services has been seen. A rise in referrals to Prevention and Children's Social Care over the next year is therefore expected.
- 6.2.11. *Prevention and Early Help-* The Council have supported early years and childcare settings to reopen in line with government guidance from 1 June. Over 200 settings are now open. The number of vulnerable children attending settings is continuing to increase due to concerted work with families. Cases open to the Cheshire East Family Service are increasingly becoming more complex. Lockdown has had an impact on the mental health of our children, young people and parents/ carers so our intervention and existing plans and priorities within them are changing as a result. The Youth Support Service is carrying out joint work with PCSOs in local communities targetting hot spots where young people are gathering. This has been positively received by young people and parents.
- 6.2.12. *Education-* The Council agreed a position on the opening of schools which was communicated to all parents and schools. The Council's priority has been to ensure pupils are safe. PPE has been delivered to all schools prior to reopening. All schools completed risk assessments before re-opening to ensure safe arrangements were in place for pupils. Risk assessments for all 68 maintained schools have been reviewed to ensure arrangements were compliant with the government guidance.

- 6.2.13. Primary schools re-opened from 15 June to all eligible nursery-aged pupils, and to all Reception and Year 1 pupils from 22 June. At the time of writing plans have been put in place for schools to reopen to Year 6 pupils from 29 June. Secondary schools and colleges started to offer some face to face support for Year 10 and Year 12\* pupils (\*Year 11 for alternative provision) from 15 June (in line with the government guidance). Schools have been asked to consider creating targeted provision for 'bubbles' of pupils who are vulnerable to underperformance or disengagement to help to support them in their education.
- 6.2.14. Pupils of special schools were encouraged to return to school based on a review of their individual risk assessment from 15 June. Priority has been given to increasing places to children of key workers and children who have a social worker. Special schools are using a phased approach to support a wider opening to children and young people, which enables small groups to adjust to changes where this is appropriate. Special schools will steadily increase pupil numbers, prioritising key transition groups.
- 6.2.15. For pupils who are not in school, schools have been asked to ensure that children who are due to transition between schools in September are supported while they remain at home. Schools have been asked to review their home learning arrangements and support for wellbeing of children and young people, ensuring they have regular contact with all children not invited back into school to encourage and support learning and wellbeing.
- 6.2.16. *Waste, Highways and Environmental Services*- Kerbside collection of waste has continued throughout the period. Unlike some councils, Cheshire East has continued to collect recycling materials, garden and food waste. All eight Household Waste and Recycling Centres are now open. Highways operations have all continued to function to ensure the road network remains safe and a core bus network has been maintained for essential travel. All activities have been assessed and adapted where necessary to ensure works can be delivered in line with the public health guidelines. Where it is possible roadworks are being progressed to take advantage of the lower levels of traffic on the road network.
- 6.2.17. *Bereavement Services*- Cemeteries and Crematoria have remained open throughout this period and capacity has been increased to support bereaved families and to enable funerals and ceremonies to continue.
- 6.2.18. *Libraries*- Following announcements regarding further easing of restrictions plans have been put in place to enable libraries to reopen on a phased basis from 6 July. A number of measures will be put in place to maintain social distancing such as limited entry to libraries, reduced opening hours, enhanced cleaning regimes, reducing the number of PCs available for public

by 50% to allow for spacing of 2m between each workstation and quarantining books for 72 hours before being reissued.

- 6.2.19. *Leisure Centres*- remain closed owing to Government directions that gyms and swimming pools are not to reopen. Plans for their reopening will be communicated once they are able to do so.
- 6.2.20. *Homelessness and Rough Sleepers*- The Council has been able to accommodate 118 households temporarily during the pandemic. The council is maintaining delivery of the Council's statutory duties towards homeless households in the borough and our Rough Sleeping Outreach workers are working with those who are currently sleeping rough to move them into more appropriate accommodation.
- 6.2.21. *Workforce* - COVID-19 related absences are being monitored on a regular basis, including the numbers of staff self-isolating and/or off sick. There are currently 106 staff self-isolating, 110 absent from work, and most of the workforce, 2260 working from home.
- 6.2.22. *Governance and Decision Making*- Cheshire East Council has now held ten virtual public meetings. Members and officers have worked well together to enable these to be successful. There have been a small number of technical and connection issues which have been resolved. Over 40 training sessions have now taken place with Members on Microsoft Teams and support will continue to be offered.

### 6.3. **Recovery- Sub-Regional Approach**

- 6.3.1. Cheshire East Council is leading and supporting the Local Resilience Forum in developing its future planning for the recovery from this pandemic. The Strategic Co-ordinating Group of the LRF has established a sub-group leading on this Recovery. This is chaired by the Chief Executive of Cheshire East Council and includes senior colleagues from local authorities, the NHS, Public Health, Police and Fire.
- 6.3.2. This group is focused on longer-term recovery with the strategic aims: to enable the sub-region to deliver its ambitions around delivering continued economic growth in a sustainable and inclusive way, to instil confidence and provide clarity to our communities and business in relation to recovery and to take advantage of the opportunities that the response to the pandemic has created.

6.3.3. The group has established a programme of work which includes

- Anticipating and managing future demands on public services as the lock down restrictions such as additional safeguarding referrals, increases in domestic abuse, increases demand on health services and social care.
- Ensuring robust plans are in place should there be second waves of the pandemic and/or localised outbreaks.
- Reviewing and managing any issues that arise in relation to community safety, crime and community cohesion.
- Developing a sub-regional strategy for economic recovery.
- Providing future support packages relating to mental health, skills development and employment support
- Developing appropriate plans to support the effective day to day running of the sub-region e.g. support for city and town centres public transport and traffic management.

6.4. **Recovery - Council Approach, First Phase**

6.4.1. On 11 May 2020, the government published its COVID-19 recovery strategy “*Our Plan to Rebuild*” which outlined the potential stages of easing lock down restrictions. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>. The first of these phases was planned for 15 June.

6.4.2. The Council, working with its partners, has therefore been putting arrangements in place to enable towns, businesses and communities to operate safely.

6.4.3. *Schools*- It is important to note that schools have remained open throughout the pandemic to enable vulnerable children and the children of key workers to be able to be supported. Schools have re-opened using a phased approach to Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Secondary schools and colleges are offering face to face support to Year 10 and Year 12\* pupils (Year 11 for alternative provision settings). Special schools are also welcoming back additional children on a risk assessed basis, which takes account of health and care needs. This followed extensive consultation, engagement and planning with parents, school governors, headteachers, trade unions and transport providers. This engagement has enabled the successful reopening of schools for these pupils.



- 6.4.4. As plans continue for a full return to education from September, the government has announced a £1 billion one-off grant to support pupils to 'catch up' on education. This recognises that all young people have lost time in education as a result of the pandemic, regardless of their income or background. £650 million will be shared across state primary and secondary schools over the 2020/21 academic year. Head teachers will decide how the money is spent, but the government expects this to be used for small group tuition for the pupils that need it. £350 million will fund a National Tutoring Programme, which aims to increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people over the 2020/21 academic year.
- 6.4.5. The Secretary of State for Education has announced that all pupils will return to school from September. Planning is taking place to prepare, including arrangements for safe home to school transport. The Council is awaiting guidance from the DfE and DfT on their plans to enable the return of all pupils to happen in a safe way. Social distancing will impact on the capacity of many schools to accommodate all pupils.
- 6.4.6. *Town Centres*- On 19 May the Council wrote to members and town and parish councils seeking ideas and proposals of how temporary measures could be introduced to enable towns and businesses to open safely. On 24 May, the Government supported its recovery strategy with publication of the *Reopening High Streets Safely* guidance.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reopening-high-streets-safely-fund-guidance>.
- 6.4.7. This process has informed the design and implementation of a range of experimental and temporary adjustments such as temporary road closures, signage, footway markers, guidance to businesses etc to promote the safe opening and operation of businesses, facilitate safe queuing and to promote cycling. These are the first phase of measures and were implemented on 15 June.
- 6.4.8. These measures are temporary and experimental in nature. The Council has therefore made several changes to amend and refine them based on feedback received from members, town and parish councils and residents and local businesses.
- 6.4.9. In addition, the Council lifted the temporary suspension of car parking tariffs across the Borough on 15 June. As outlined in section 7.2, the Council is projecting a significant shortfall in its overall income as a result of the pandemic. The income from car parks forms part of this overall income which is why the Council took the decision to remove this temporary

suspension. It is to be noted that the neighbouring councils in the sub-region are all now charging for car parking in their areas.

6.4.10. At the time of writing, the Council is now reviewing the first phase of measures and putting further plans in place to support the further easing of restrictions which are planned to be introduced from 4 July onwards. This includes provision of support to the hospitality and food sector including the provision of support to enable businesses to set up temporary al fresco facilities where this is safe and practicable to do so. Regulatory Services Officers have been monitoring how things are working in our town centres, identifying any problems and premises that would benefit from advice and guidance and if necessary, formal action to ensure that they are Covid-19 secure.

6.4.11. *Active Travel* – As outlined in paragraph 6.4.7 several measures have been introduced that support walking and cycling in town centres. This is the first phase of measures to be introduced, a range of other measures such as temporary 20mph zones, cycle lanes and safer walking routes are planned to be introduced over the coming weeks. Again, these have been informed by the proposals that have been submitted from colleagues in our town and parish councils and will also link with the work taking place on Home to School Transport.

## **6.5. Longer Term Recovery**

6.5.1. In addition to supporting the initial stepping back of services from 15 June onwards the Council is also developing plans to support the longer term recovery from the pandemic.

6.5.2. *Test and Trace*- Having effective systems in place in relation to testing and tracing the virus will be essential to support long term recovery and to provide community and business confidence in the Borough.

6.5.3. On 23 April, the Government announced the establishment of a National Contact Tracing Service (NCTS) as part of a Test and Trace approach. Local Authorities will have a key role to play in delivering this service. The local element of the national contact tracing programme will be led by Cheshire East Council working with Public Health England when there is a local outbreak of COVID-19 requiring significant local action.

6.5.4. Local Authorities in England have been asked to develop Local Outbreak Plans by the end of June describing how they will tackle outbreaks in their areas. Local Directors of Public Health will provide a leadership role in local outbreak response. A Health Protection Board is being established to oversee the implementation of the local Outbreak Plan.

- 6.5.5. To enable a coordinated approach across Cheshire and Merseyside our public health team is working closely with Public Health England and the other Local Authorities. The Outbreak Plans will build on existing infection prevention and control systems and emergency response arrangements and incorporate the Government's new requirements for protecting local people from COVID 19.
- 6.5.6. The current Outbreak Plan for Cheshire East was published on the Council's website on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020; it is to be noted that this plan is subject to review on an ongoing basis.
- 6.5.7. *Workforce and Workplace* - COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on both the workforce and the workplace. In line with Government advice, those staff who can work from home are continuing to do so. The council is communicating with staff and Trade Unions on a regular basis. Advice and support regarding emotional wellbeing continues to be provided. Staff have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the Council and the Borough through their hard work and dedication throughout this pandemic.
- 6.5.8. The Council's planned recovery work in this regard is looking at the arrangements for IT, HR, facilities management, health and safety and risk, taking a phased approach. Phase 1 has been to start to step up front-line services, including car parking, household waste and recycling centres, site visits, home visits by social workers. Phase 2 is in process in terms of stepping back our front-line buildings, for example, face to face birth registrations are now available in Crewe. Phase 3 is designing how the Council will operate in the future.
- 6.5.9. The Council is not planning any significant return of staff to administrative buildings before 1 September 2020. Changes have been made at Westfields, Macclesfield Town Hall, Municipal Buildings and Delamere House in terms of ingress/egress, one-way systems, social distancing measures, hygiene and infection control.
- 6.5.10. All organisations must prepare and publish a COVID-SECURE Notice, agreed with the Trade Unions. Once the arrangements to do this have been finalised this will be reported to members.
- 6.5.11. *Community*- the Council anticipates that there will significant long-term impacts on communities in Cheshire East. For example, there is expected to be a significant increase in unemployment and reduction in household income. As outlined at paragraph 6.3.3. it is expected that services will see an increase in demand as referrals increase in relation to safeguarding, domestic abuse and social care support. The council, working with its

partners will be ensuring that it continues to support vulnerable people as well providing appropriate support in relation skills, employability, mental health and personal resilience.

- 6.5.12. *Economy* -Cheshire East Council continues to work with local businesses and business organisations (including Chambers of Commerce, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, Federation of Small Businesses and National Farmers Union) to channel business-based support to meet local need and to enable businesses to support each other.
- 6.5.13. To date, the Council has delivered over £80m to almost 6,600 small businesses in the last few weeks. On 1<sup>st</sup> June the Council launched an additional Discretionary Grant scheme to support small local business which have not been able to access other funding. This closed on 15<sup>th</sup> June with 462 applications being received. Based on the feedback received and review of this first phase the Discretionary Grant Policy was amended to enable the funds to be allocated to a wider range of businesses. This second phase was launched on 24 June.
- 6.5.14. In addition the Council and its partners are developing plans for the longer term economic recovery of the Borough. This approach will include:
- Support to businesses in the Borough including a focus on the sectors most likely to be impacted by the pandemic such as the hospitality sector. In addition support will continue to be provided to the key businesses and key sectors in the local economy.
  - Continuing to support our town centres and businesses that operate from them.
  - Developing a future pipeline of development and regeneration projects that can stimulate the local economy
  - Ensuring that the Borough has an effective place marketing approach so that it is able to promote itself for inward investment in the future.
- 6.5.15. *Environment*- As outlined elsewhere in this report some significant changes has been made to the way people travel and work in the Borough. This creates an opportunity for the Council and its partners to accelerate its aims as outlined in the Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan. For example, the council has significantly reduced the amount of physical building space being used on a daily basis, more people are working from home and are using active travel methods when they are commuting for work. The council will therefore be doing as much as it can to capitalise on

this to enable permanent changes to be made such as those relating to transport or the use of council buildings.

## **7 Implications of the Recommendations**

### **Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 25 March. The Act has extensive schedules setting out a wide framework to life under lockdown. The Act has been followed with copious and frequent guidance notes, frequently with implementation dates ahead of what is practically possible, e.g. Household Waste and Recycling Centres, administration of School Admission Appeals, restrictions on and subsequent opening of certain business premises, Test and Trace.
- 7.2 The Coronavirus Act also set out a framework by which Local Authorities could reduce their statutory duties in relation to the Care Act 2014, for Adult Social Care. These Care Act Easements could be implemented should the capacity of Adult Social Care staff become so reduced that it could not continue to meet its duties. To date Cheshire East Council has not initiated any Care Act Easements.
- 7.3 This may mean actions have to be taken rapidly. Any urgent decisions will follow the process set out in the Constitution.

### **Finance Implications**

- 7.4 The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (approved by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020) is under unprecedented pressure due to the response required to protect both the health and economic wellbeing of local people and businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic. To date the Council has received funding related to an array of activities in response to the crisis. This funding includes both ringfenced and non-ringfenced allocations.
- 7.5 To ensure transparency for stakeholders it is important that the Council's budget is kept up to date with the latest funding received and the expenditure incurred to date. It is also important to recognise forecast risks to the Council's MTFS.

7.6 *Ringfenced Funding*- Table One below identifies allocations of ringfenced funding to Cheshire East Council at the time of writing.

<b>Table One : Summary of ring fenced funding allocations to Cheshire East Council</b>		
<b>Activity (National Total)</b>	<b>Allocation to Cheshire East Council</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Business Rate Holiday (£9.7bn)	£58,785,655	This benefit has been fully passed on to Local Businesses and does not support the costs of the Council
Council Tax Hardship (£500m)	£2,062,635	Although this funding has been allocated to support those facing hardship with council tax payments the financial impact of this for the Council is estimated to £2.5m. Therefore, the funding does not fully cover the costs to the Council
Business Grants (£12.3bn)	£95,514,000	This is to be distributed to be businesses in the Borough. Guidance is being sought from Government as whether any balance could be used to support other business support schemes at the Council's discretion in the future
Disc. Business Grants (£617m)		At present the Council is able to allocate £4.3m to businesses on the basis of a local policy. This is to be funded initially from the £95m outlined above. Therefore, if the £95m is fully allocated the council has the ability to claim for a further £4.3m at that point.
Test & Trace (£300m)	£1,533,331	This will contribute to the additional costs associated with the additional responsibilities that come with test and trace as outlined in the outbreak plan
Infection Control (£600m)	£5,320,292	This is ring fenced. To date 50% has been allocated to support infection control measures in care homes and other care settings.

Active Travel (£225m)	£774,000	This is an indicative allocation. A return for the first phase of this funding for £155k has been submitted and has been approved by DfT
Opening High Streets (£500m)	£339,533	This is an indicative allocation of share of the European Regional Development Fund which will require claims to be made retrospectively for measures taken to support the reopening of our town centres.
Local Bus Network (£167m)	£229,632	This funding has been allocated to bus companies and is not contributing to the costs of the Council.
Rough Sleeping (£32m)	£6,000	This has contributed to the additional costs associated with the additional responsibilities to find temporary accommodation for rough sleepers

7.7 *Non-Ringfenced Funding*- In addition the Council has also been allocated grant funding from MHCLG. The first payment, worth £9.15m to Cheshire East Council, was allocated nationally based on the relative needs of councils based on an Adult Social Care formula.

7.8 In calculating the second payment, worth £10.539m to the Council, MHCLG recognised that the financial impact on authorities was much wider. The second payment was therefore calculated on a much simpler basis of £28 per head of population.

7.9 The Council has complied with data gathering requests from MHCLG and has submitted financial returns in April, May and June. The June return to MHCLG estimated the financial impacts for the period April to July and an additional estimate for the full 2020/21 Financial Year.

7.10 Like many councils, Cheshire East continues to face increased costs and demand pressures at the same time as seeing a significant drop in income. The full year effect for 2020/21 is currently estimated to be £70m. The Cabinet report of June 9<sup>th</sup> outlined a potential financial impact of £60m. The main reasons for the variance in this projection is that an increased risk has been projected in relation to Home to School transport from September onwards.



- 7.11 In addition, the Collection Fund is facing significant shortfalls compared to the MTFS. The Collection Fund is a way to manage income from Local Taxation, and this is currently facing shortfalls due to low levels of growth in the tax base, increases in claimants as well as the deferral of payments and non-payments issues all related to the impact of the COVID-19. This issue has been reported to MHCLG, although deficits on the Collection Fund are normally only managed in subsequent financial years.
- 7.12 If there is a period where the financial impacts exceed the level of funding received from Central Government this would present a risk to the Council's existing MTFS.
- 7.13 A detailed report on the impacts of the pandemic on the existing MTFS and approved budget will be reported to a forthcoming meeting of Cabinet. Any appropriate approvals, if required, to amend the agreed budget will be sought through these papers.

## **8.1 Policy Implications**

COVID-19 is having a wide-ranging impact on many policies. Any significant implications for the council's policies are outlined in this report.

## **8.2 Equality Implications**

Implications of the changes will continue to be reviewed. There have been some positive benefits in terms of additional funding for vulnerable people. Public Health England published a report on 16 June 2020 "Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-understanding-the-impact-on-bame-communities>

It concluded that there is clear evidence that COVID-19 does not affect all population groups equally. Many analyses have shown that older age, ethnicity, male sex and geographical areas are associated with the risk of getting the infection, experiencing more severe symptoms and higher rates of death. Death rates from COVID-19 were higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups. The report concludes that further national work is required to ensure that COVID-19 recovery strategies actively reduce inequalities caused by the wider determinants of health to create long term sustainable change which is appropriately funded. Further work is needed on local data to ensure that appropriate action can be taken.



### **8.3 Human Resources Implications**

Paragraphs 6.2.21 and 6.5.6 provide information in relation to the Council's workforce and workplace. Throughout the pandemic, there has been regular communication with staff and good co-operation with the Trade Unions. Most recently, discussions have taken place with a group of BAME employees to hear directly about their issues and concerns in the light of recent national and international developments.

### **8.4 Risk Management Implications**

Risk registers have been maintained as part of the Council's response to date and the plans for recovery. Business Continuity Plans are being kept under review and plans have been tested against concurrent risks.

### **8.5 Rural Communities Implications**

COVID-19 is having an impact across all communities, including rural communities. The support for small businesses will support rural business.

### **8.6 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

There are implications for children and young people. There are implications for schools, early years and children's social care which are summarised in the report.

### **8.7 Public Health Implications**

COVID-19 is a global pandemic and public health emergency. There are implications for Cheshire East which are summarised in the report.

### **8.8 Climate Change Implications**

They have been positive benefits of fewer cars on the road. This includes most staff who have been working from home. There has also been lower demand for heating/lighting offices. This is outlined in paragraph 6.5.14.

## **9 Ward Members Affected**

All Members.

## **10 Consultation & Engagement**

Formal consultation activities have been paused due to the lockdown restrictions. The Council is considering how and when they can be restarted.

## **11 Access to Information**

Comprehensive reports on COVID-19 can be found on the Council's and the Government's websites.

## **12 Contact Information**

Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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