

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 1st December 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

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. Cabinet have received reports in June, July, September, October and November on how the Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and plan for the recovery from it.
- 1.2. This report provides a further update of the work undertaken in response to this national and international public health emergency since the November report.
- 1.3. The report also summarises the latest information on infection rates, the local measures instigated as a result and the second national lockdown.
- 1.4. The financial impact of the pandemic on the council continues to be significant. The report provides a further update, which will also be of interest to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and the Audit and Governance Committees.
- 1.5. It is important to note that there will be other new developments following the publication of this report. Verbal updates will be given at the meeting, as appropriate.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the issues outlined in the report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves a Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £880,472, fully funded from the Covid Winter Grant.
- 2.3 That Cabinet provide delegated responsibility to the Executive Director of People to distribute the Covid Winter Grant, to provide assistance to vulnerable households over the winter period, in line with the eligibility criteria outlined within this report.
- 2.4 That Cabinet approves a Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £500,000, fully funded from Covid-19 Emergency Grant, to provide an increase in the 2020/21 management fee payment to Everybody Sport and Recreation Trust to support the continuation of Leisure Services in the Borough.
- 2.5 That Cabinet note that a Supplementary Revenue Estimate was approved by the Chief Executive for the 2020/21 Financial Year, of £15,262,935, to be funded from the Local Restrictions Support Grant. The grant will support businesses affected by measures introduced in the response to Covid-19, in accordance with government guidelines, and in accordance with the Discretionary policies also approved under urgency powers.

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1. Not applicable.

4. Background

- 4.1. At the time of writing the most recent WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update issued on 15 November showed a continued steep rise with almost 4 million new cases of Covid-19 reported in the previous week (9-15 November).
- 4.2. From 30 December 2019 through 15 November 2020, over 53.7 million COVID-19 cases and 1.3 million deaths have been reported globally. Whilst the European Region reports the highest number of new cases globally (46%), it saw a 10% fall in the previous week following strengthening of public health and social measures. The number of new deaths in Europe has increased substantially with over 29,000 deaths reported in the past week. The Region of the Americas saw a sharp upward trend with a 41% increases in new cases in the past week. The South-East Asia Region reported a decline in the number of new cases and new deaths. (Source WHO)
- 4.3. The latest international, national and local statistics are available from the following data dashboards:

- 4.4. <https://covid19.who.int/>
- 4.5. <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>
- 4.6. In England, the Department of Health and Social Care report that there has been an average of 19,373 new cases over the last seven-day period (as at 17 November) with a high number of cases in Yorkshire and Humber, North East England, West Midlands and the North West.
- 4.7. To counter rising rates of infection and increasing hospital admissions, the UK Government introduced a new set of National Restrictions on 5 November to apply to the whole of England. These restricted day to day contact with others requiring individuals to stay at home, except for specific purposes, avoid mixing with others and the closure of non-essential premises. Schools, colleges and universities have stayed open. Currently, national government is signalling these measures will continue until 2 December. Details of this change are found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>
- 4.8. The respective administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have introduced measures that have been tailored to their country's circumstances.
- 4.9. In terms of the daily confirmed cases, in the last full week of data, 732 people in Cheshire East have tested positive (as at 16 November, 2020). This figure compares to the 626 people who in the last Cabinet report were recorded as testing positive. The local infection rate was recorded as 191 cases per 100,000 population. The corresponding rate for England was 241 cases per 100,000.
- 4.10. Within Cheshire East the current data suggest a decline in cases from a rate of 250 per 100,000 seen around 11 November to the current rate of 191 per 100,000. This may indicate the National Restrictions taking effect. However, we have seen well-publicised problems with data in the past few months and we need to be cautious in the interpretation of this potential down turn in cases. It is more realistic to say we have no evidence of cases increasing.
- 4.11. Over the last month case rates for all age groups have increased. This increase remains the highest for the 16-29 age group. Of note, those aged 65 plus have increased from a low of 82 in late October to 139 per 100,000. However in the last few days all groups have seen small decreases in the case rates per 100,000.
- 4.12. Covid-19 infections linked to schools have increased in both staff and pupils. At 11 November, there were 66 pupils and 34 staff with current positive tests making 47 schools with positive cases. There was a small decrease in activity following half term, but current figures show a continued rise.

- 4.13. Care homes continue to be a focus for infection prevention and control and the weekly testing of staff continues and this is helping to detect people who may not have symptoms and as a result reduces the risk of a serious outbreak. Data to 13 November showed outbreaks in 18 care homes.
- 4.14. National testing capacity has improved. This change is due to additional laboratory capacity coming on stream. Whilst access to testing is still controlled nationally our local monitoring of testing demand indicates that local residents are not experiencing the problems of accessing tests locally. A significant factor has been the deployment of a Local Testing site in Crewe that is open seven days a week from 8am-8pm. A second local testing site is under consideration for Macclesfield on the site of a former vehicle depot.
- 4.15. The Government has acknowledged that the national contact tracing system that is coordinated by Serco is not achieving the level of follow up required. Following the introduction of its new Tier system the Government has written to all Tier Two Local Authorities to advise them of the additional funding being made available to them to enhance the local Test and Trace Programme. For High Risk areas such as Cheshire East the allocation is £3 per head of population. This funding is a non-recurrent allocation.
- 4.16. Financial support for Local Authorities at Local COVID Alert Level Medium and High is to fund the following activities:
- a. Targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes.
 - b. Additional contact tracing.
 - c. Enhanced communication and marketing e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging.
 - d. Delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation.
 - e. Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.
 - f. Harnessing capacity within local sectors (voluntary, academic, commercial).
 - g. Extension/introduction of specialist support (behavioural science, bespoke comms).
 - h. Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance.

5. Update on Council Actions

5.1. Cheshire East Council continues to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. At the same time the Council has continued to strive to

- deliver essential local services

- protect our most vulnerable people
- support our communities and local businesses.

5.2. A summary of the actions that have continued to be delivered by the Council is provided below.

5.3. *Test and Trace and Outbreak Management* – There are several developments within the Test and Trace Programme:

- As the COVID-19 infection rate has continued to rise over recent months, the need for local contact tracing has become more apparent. Subsequently, pressure has been mounting on local authorities across England to provide locally supported contact tracing that compliments, not replaces, the national Contact Tracing Advisory System. According to Public Health England, the national Contact Tracing Advisory System (CTAS) responds to approximately 70% of positive test results within Cheshire East. Around 30% of cases are classified as ‘lost to follow up’, which means the national system has not made contact within 24 hours. From 25 November 2020, these cases are being handed over to the local Cheshire East contact tracing team that has recently been created. It will be a phased delivery, initially switching on only postcodes of significant concern from 25th November and by early 2021 this will be a service being delivered for the whole of Cheshire East. It will be led by the Contact Centre and specialist support provided by a Public Health team.
- Cheshire East Council is taking part in a national Mass Asymptomatic Testing (MAST) pilot project. This will involve a new kind of technology that could enable us to identify and isolate more asymptomatic people who might spread the virus. They are known as Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs), which use the same swab method as the usual testing method but offer a rapid turnaround time of approximately 20-30 minutes, without the need for laboratory processing. We are in the process of working with the national team to receive a starter pack of 10,000 initial test kits and will be provided with enough kits to test 10% of the Cheshire East population. This will enable local teams to direct and deliver targeted testing based on their local knowledge and need. We are working with internal teams to identify pilot projects to test out this new technology before rolling it out more widely.

5.4. *Covid-19 Mass Vaccination* – Whilst an effective vaccine has yet to be manufactured for population usage, local authorities are being asked to assist the NHS to develop their plans for conducting mass vaccination. Cheshire East Council staff are working closely with Clinical Commissioning Group and Cheshire West and Chester Council colleagues to identify possible locations for

delivering the core programme and localised programmes for those unable to attend the core centres. The Government has requested local health and social care economies to be ready to support COVID vaccination by 1 December 2020. When a vaccine is available we will support our local care homes to access the vaccine working in partnership with the NHS.

5.5. Depending on the COVID vaccinations made available, more than one dose may be necessary to provide a sufficient level of protection for the population. This requirement will place a significant pressure on the health and social care system to deliver effectively, even with the phased approach that is planned to offer protection to every member of the population. Due to demand for influenza vaccination and delays in the supply chain, this programme may overlap with the COVID vaccination programme.

5.6. *Communities - People Helping People* is a service created by Cheshire East Council which works collaboratively with new and existing Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector partners and local volunteers to channel community-based support to meet the needs of our residents. The service is delivered for the local community, by the local community. To date the service has provided support to over 4,000 residents with 400 active cases still receiving support. This service has been instrumental in reducing demands and work is now underway to embed this into the Communities Team recovery planning, fully utilising volunteers to support people to keep safe and well at home. As the country has entered a second national lockdown this service has been key to be able to respond at speed to the most vulnerable cohort in the community ensuring they remain safe and well in their own homes having good access to volunteers or community based activities that meet their basic physical and mental health needs. This service is quickly becoming recognised amongst all residents across the borough as a vital community service. Some key recent updates associated with this service are as follows:

- Support for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) was re-introduced on 5 November alongside the introduction of the four-week national lockdown. The 16,000 CEV cohort were advised by the Department of Health and Social Care to stay at home closely mirroring the advice provided around “shielding” in the spring. The Council is expected to make contact with all of the CEV people who have registered requesting support. This is anticipated to be around 10% of the cohort (1,600). Once contact is made during a welfare check, support is provided assessing both physical and mental health needs with either food provision or by linking the individual to an appropriate local community-based service. Funding has been allocated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and

Local Government to provide this support which is being allocated to related activity.

- Leading on the Community & Vulnerable people workstream of the Test, Trace, Contain and Enable plan.
- The Cheshire East Social Action Partnership have developed 15 Volunteer Coordination Points (VCPs) which supported the response to date providing localised support, longer term plans are now under development of their continuation including sustainability as this initiative is becoming embedded into longer term practice.

5.7. The Covid-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund which was launched at the end of June 2020 has since provided funding to 69 successful applicants, totalling just over £300,000. This fund was also bolstered with an additional £246,000 of DEFRA funding to support vulnerable people around food poverty and accessing essential supplies. In consultation with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector the grant amounts applied for has increased from £5,000 to £20,000. This will welcome proposals that are collaborative, sustainable, and have a high impact to support vulnerable residents over the winter months. The target aims based on needs gathered from residents will focus on tackling food, fuel and digital poverty.

5.8. *Adult Social Care* - The Commissioning Team have provided significant support for the Adults Social Care Market during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure market stability and the safe service delivery and provision of care for the residents of Cheshire East. This includes Care Homes, Care at Home (Domiciliary Care), Complex Needs, Extra Care Housing and Supported Living schemes.

5.9. Infection Prevention Control training has now been delivered to all care providers in the Borough. Infection Prevention Control webinar refresher training sessions continue to be delivered on a monthly basis to all Care Homes across the Borough.

5.10. Cheshire East received the first tranche of funding from Round 2 of the Infection Control fund on 2 October 2020 equating to £2.356 million. Of this £1.567 million has been passported directly to care homes to support with the Infection Control measures specified in Government guidance. These measures are designed to limit staff movement within the home, support safe visiting among other workforce resilience and infection control measures. £672k has been distributed to community care providers with a registered office in Cheshire East from this funding in accordance with Government guidelines around use of the fund.

- 5.11. All care homes have an Infection Prevention Control Outbreak Plan supported by an Outbreak Management Toolkit issued by the Council. These can be quickly stepped up in the event of an outbreak and appropriate support put in place from the Infection Prevention and Control service and the Council's Quality Assurance team.
- 5.12. Officers are also working with care providers to ensure that their staff and care home residents continue to access flu vaccinations to ensure that there is resilience in the care workforce.
- 5.13. Monthly care home webinars have been set up in partnership with Cheshire CCG for care home providers with themed agendas such as Winter Planning, infection control, digital services etc. The next webinar is taking place on Thursday 26 November 2020 and has a focus on Infection Prevention Control, Flu Outbreak common themes and trends, Visiting advice, and Counselling and Bereavement Support for Care Home staff.
- 5.14. Weekly mutual aid calls continue to be well attended by Care at Home providers. These now include guest expert speakers and offer an opportunity for providers to work together to develop collective solutions to common problems. Professor Rod Thomson, CEC, Public Health Consultant attended the mutual aid call as a guest speaker and answered providers COVID-19 related Public Health questions.
- 5.15. 74 Care Homes across the Borough have been allocated a free iPad via NHSE. The iPads continue to enable residents to stay in touch with their loved ones and facilitate GP consultations.
- 5.16. Whole home testing continues with care home residents and staff. This has proved effective in identifying asymptomatic staff members at an early stage enabling them to self-isolate to prevent onward transmission in the care home. The whole home testing pilot continues to be working well across the Extra Care Housing and Supported Living Schemes.
- 5.17. The Care Home vaccination delivery plan has been completed, verified and submitted to Cheshire CCG. Ongoing local planning continues with Cheshire CCH and Public Health in relation to timescales and the administration of the vaccination.
- 5.18. Planning is underway with the Council's Public Health Team to explore the possibility of Lateral Flow Testing across Care Homes. Lateral flow tests allow a quick turnaround of results (within 20 minutes) and so, if implemented correctly and with the normal precautions around PPE and social distancing, can support safe visiting within care homes.

5.19. A Multi-Disciplinary Team has been established to design a relatives visiting strategy for Care Homes across Cheshire East that complements the existing Department of Health and Social Care guidance. The purpose of the strategy is to offer guidance and support to homes around facilitating creative visiting options for family members in a safe way. The strategy will offer comprehensive guidance, advice and support to Care Homes that can be referenced within the home's Dynamic Risk Assessment. Once the strategy is finalised it will be agreed by Cheshire East Council's Director of Public Health and monitored locally via Infection Prevention Control and the Council's Quality Assurance Team.

5.20. The Quality Assurance Team continue to undertake weekly contact calls to all care homes across the Borough. The purpose of this contact call is to seek assurance of the effective ongoing safe service delivery.

5.21. PPE support has been key to our Covid-19 response and recovery. The position changes rapidly but the current position at the time of writing is as follows:

- The Local Authority have been supplied with some PPE via the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) since the 24 March 2020. The Council have distributed PPE to eligible organisations across Cheshire East.
- All registered adult social care providers, opticians, pharmacists and urgent dental care have now been requested to register on to the government PPE Portal to continue to access free supplies. Orders are subject to limits according to capacity. Providers are asked to continue to develop their own supply chain. However, it is widely recognised that the PPE market has not recovered from the impact of Covid-19.
- To ensure all agencies are supported and services are able to deliver safe care to local residents, as well as protecting the care workforce, we are currently reviewing various options and opportunities to support external Care Providers to access PPE in emergencies or when they have issues with their PPE supply chain. A survey was opened to providers, educational settings and partner organisation to understand the overall impact of PPE at this juncture and how best to proceed forward.
- A stock has been locally purchased as part of the Council's recovery and outbreak planning, and we will continue to receive LRF PPE supplies on a fortnightly basis until March 2021 to support Local Authority, people in receipt of direct payment and all educational settings.

- A joint effort by the Fire Service and Cheshire East Highways to deliver PPE to schools has been very well received and we continue to work with schools to ensure their practices are aligned to the Public Health guidelines.

5.22. *Adults and Children's Commissioning* - Commissioners have worked closely with our 'Early Intervention and Prevention,' 'Community Wellbeing' and 'Public Health' contracted providers which have adapted but continued to deliver effective services during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Commissioners have worked with providers to re-instate contingency plans where needed in line with the second national lockdown. Despite the restrictions to service delivery of contracted services due to the pandemic and now the second national lockdown, we are seeing increasing demand for services as well as innovation in the way that services are delivered for example:

Substance Misuse Service – Our Substance Misuse Provider CGL have seen a rise in demand and referral for alcohol treatment and support since the beginning of the pandemic. The service has received 402 referrals during quarter 2 2020/21 in comparison to 261 referrals during quarter 2 2019/20. Over 60% of all referrals to CGL identified alcohol as the primary substance use at assessment. CGL have identified alternative safe ways of working and supporting people in Cheshire East such as offering Safe Storage to all service users in response to more service users having to take home medication. At the start of Q1, 13% of service users had safe storage at home. This was previously for people with children. By the end of June 2020 90% of all service users on a prescription have safe storage now in their homes. Throughout the pandemic treatment for Hepatitis C has still been delivered. Staff have delivered a Covid-safe outreach service utilising their clinic van and actively engaging the service users rather than requiring them to attend treatment services. This has helped to support many service users to keep safe and those that are shielding.

Carers Hub: Evidence from Carers UK shows that 4 in 5 unpaid Carers (81%) are currently providing more care than before the initial lockdown. Most Carers (64%) have not been able to take any breaks at all in the last six months. Connections were therefore made between the People Helping People service and the Carers Hub at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure that Carers were recognised and supported where needed via the Carers Hub. A temporary service to deliver breaks for carers during lockdown was set up (Take a Break) and delivered by Crossroads Together. The referrals received by the Carers Hub are reviewed for carers needs and then referred to Crossroads Together for assessment for the 'Take a Break' service. A positive relationship has developed between the two services with them working collaboratively to support carers.

Domestic Abuse Service: The Domestic Abuse Contract is within its second annual term. Despite not being able to offer the same community-based services as pre-lockdown, the service have ensured they remain visible on social media, with partner agencies and stakeholders to make the community aware the service is very much open and available to those who need it. Additional resource has also been positioned into the Domestic Abuse Hub to ensure clients are supported with early intervention work.

- 5.23. *Children's Social Care* – We have reviewed our service offer in light of the national lockdown and revised government guidance, and agreed it is important to maintain statutory service provision in line with our usual processes where it is safe to do so, including face to face visits, in order to effectively safeguard children and young people. Visits are carefully risk assessed to consider the risk of Covid to the child and wider family members. We have changed our recording system to ensure this risk assessment is clearly documented on children's files, so it is clear how decisions have been made. The guidance on face to face visits has been updated in line with the new national guidance.
- 5.24. Family time is continuing to take place as we recognise the importance of this to children and young people's wellbeing and long-term relationships. The individual circumstances and arrangements are being reviewed for each child to determine if this can be held safely face to face or whether this needs to take place virtually.
- 5.25. We have reviewed our contingency plans in light of the national lockdown, and we have a sufficiency plan in place for placements and residential settings. We are planning for our 14 care leavers to return home from university at Christmas.
- 5.26. As reported previously, we have experienced an increase in demand and complexity across Children's Social Care as a result of Covid. This is due to a unique year in terms of conversation rate from contact to referrals into the child in need team, Court delays and discharging children from care, particularly adoption. The increase in social workers' caseloads has made it more challenging to step down children within our usual timescales. Children are being stepped down to ensure they receive the right support, however the number stepping down has increased demand to the Council's Family Service. The complexity of work has increased in relation to challenges such as children and parental mental health, substance and alcohol misuse and social isolation. This is resulting in social worker and personal advisor caseloads being higher than we would want them to be. A clear plan is in place to reduce caseloads by the end the year. To support the increase in demand, we have stepped children down to early help where appropriate and developed additional step down meetings to increase frequency, challenged the Court around matters of delay, offered additional resources to families, care leavers and foster carers and

continue to recruit to vacant posts to ensure we have capacity to meet the demand. We have also worked closely with the partnership to ensure consistency of approach.

5.27. As learning from local and national themes have emerged we have used the operational Safeguarding Children Partnership meetings to understand what this has meant for children in Cheshire East. For example, following the Children's Minister's letter on the 29 September identifying concerns regarding risk to babies and young people attending alternate provision, we ran a themed meeting to look at these areas of our practice from a multi-agency perspective. This concluded that while there was some good practice in how we supported and safeguarded young people attending alternative provision, this could be strengthened further. A multi-agency task and finish group has subsequently been set up to progress the work in this area.

5.28. During the pandemic, there was local concern that the nationally imposed restrictions would have an adverse impact for those living in abusive relationships. The fear was that not only were the risks to victims heightened and the pressures on relationships magnified, but that also there would be limited access to support from both social networks and professional services. The action taken in Cheshire East Council, and across the Partnership has been effective, swift, responsive to changes in demand and proactive in preventing further harm. The data and more importantly the stories from victims, children and those who harm have illustrated that whilst we have not experienced the surge in demand expected after lockdown restrictions were lifted, we have seen that the level of abuse experienced has been more severe (an increase of 20% for IDVA services), we have seen victims who present with multiple issues (mental health, substance misuse) rise, and a faster escalation in the seriousness in the impact of their situation. On the positive side we have also seen that the inventiveness and creativity that has been necessary, has resulted in some changes which have had real benefit and which we will seek to sustain. We have continued to follow the needs of survivors to ensure we have responded to their wishes with partial opening of centres for one to one work. Work has been carried out on how it has felt for them during Covid-19, and their feedback and comments have been collated in a [video](#) which has been shared with the partnership, senior managers and elected members to raise the profile and understanding of survivors' experiences.

5.29. Covid caused significant delays in achieving permanency for cared for children, this included delays in finalising care plans in Court, challenges in the timeliness of discharge of Care Orders and the making of Adoption Orders. We have been active in challenging this through the Local Family Justice Board. There were also delays in planned transitions for children to move to live with their adoptive families between March and July 2020. We worked closely with Adoption

Counts, foster carers, birth families and adoptive parents to transition children to live with their adoptive families as soon as restrictions began to ease in June and July 2020 ensuring we minimised the impact of Covid as much as possible for these children. However, the pandemic has delayed the move to adoptive families for some of our children and young people which has had an impact on our overall cared for numbers.

5.30. Ofsted ILACS inspections have been paused due to the national lockdown. We are continuing to prepare for inspection for when these recommence from 5 January 2021.

5.31. *Prevention and Early Help* – As reported previously we are continuing to see the needs of families increasing, alongside an increase in referrals, which is resulting in a significant pressure for the Family Service. We are recruiting additional capacity to support the service.

5.32. 98% of our early years settings continue to be open and 96% of Childminders, with 100% attendance from our vulnerable children which is positive. A comprehensive programme of activities was provided for children and young people over half term.

5.33. Cheshire East Council offered free school meal vouchers over half term to ensure that vulnerable children and young people continued to be supported. The process had to be set up at short notice and staff quickly mobilised support for families; 18 staff ran the provision of vouchers, providing vouchers to 1,316 families with 2,546 children. Local businesses and communities also offered support with meals during half term for families which was fantastic, and we also shared the details of these on the Cheshire East website.

5.34. Performance on the Troubled Families programme continues to be positive; we have met all required performance by results claims for quarter 2 and we have submitted our expected 90 claims despite the current situation.

5.35. Child Health Hubs have been established in partnership with the NHS and are operating from some of our Children's Centres. This means that more children will be able to have their health needs met in their community rather than needing to attend an acute setting. Further work to expand the support offered through these settings will take place following the pandemic.

5.36. The service is planning the implementation of the **Winter Support Grant** programme launched by DWP on Sunday 8 November. This grant of £880K is to offer practical payment support to families with children in the form of food and utilities payment support at the discretion of the Local Authority. The grant is described as not a replacement for Free School Meals (FSM), however given the links to the Marcus Rashford Campaign to ensure that Children do not go

hungry during lockdown, it is recommended that the following eligibility criteria will be adopted by Cheshire East Council in distributing this grant from December to 31 March 2021. It is proposed to pay families or individuals via vouchers and pre-paid cards which will enable flexible purchases by families/individuals and can enable food and utilities payments with clear tracking of expenditure. We want to utilise a blend of distribution through schools prior to Christmas and via the Childrens Services workforce on an ongoing basis. We anticipate this arrangement to be confirmed in DWP guidance for the WSG by 22 November 2020.

**Please note all figures are indicative as they are based on the current cohort which could change in the period before the end of March 2021. Some children will fall into multiple cohorts but will only be eligible for one payment. Some cohorts are unknown at this stage and have been estimated.*

Eligibility criteria	Payment	Estimated total
All children in receipt of Free School Meals (10,325 children)	£15 per week per child over 3 school holiday weeks including Christmas	£464,625
Young people who are care leavers up to age 25 (188 young people)	£45 payment	£8,460
Young people who are NEET aged 16-18 (170 young people)	£45 payment	£7,650
Children who are Young Carers for their parents/carers (392 children)	£45 payment	£17,640
Children Open to Childrens Social Care and Early Help Services who do not fit in to criteria above (eg. families entitled to Free Early Years Childcare and 16-18 learners in low income families) (1,800 children)	£15 per week per child over 3 school holiday weeks including Christmas	£81,000
Children living with parents who have been exposed to Domestic Abuse (352 children)	£15 per week per child over 3 school	£15,840

	holiday weeks including Christmas	
Parents/ carers who are experiencing financial hardship due to being unable to work as their children are self-isolating due to Covid 19 infection (50 parents/ carers)	To be agreed on a case by case basis	£2,250
Vulnerable children who are in need as referred by a partner agency	£15 per week per child over 3 school holiday weeks including Christmas	£9,000
Children who are vulnerable due to financial hardship	£15 per week per child, with a limit of 3 payments per child outside of school holidays.	£9,000
Estimated total cost		£615,465

5.37. *Education and Skills* – We have sent a letter from the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Families as a public thank you to leaders, teachers, college and school staff for all that they are doing to keep our children and young people safe and to ensure their education continues during the current crisis.

5.38. Attendance has remained high (48,976 pupils, 89% attendance at 13 November) and is above national, statistical neighbours, and the North West average. This is despite pupils isolating due to positive Covid test results in schools. As at 16 November there were 2,659 pupils not attending schools as they are isolating either due to Covid symptoms, testing positive for Covid or having been in close contact with a person who has tested positive. Attendance of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan and pupils with a social worker also remains good at 88% and 87% respectively.

5.39. The Education Covid Response Team which responds to reports from schools on positive cases, and offers advice and guidance on the appropriate measures and pupil isolation, continues to receive positive feedback from schools. As at 8 November, there had been 504 contacts to the helpline from 132 settings, 109 of whom had positive cases (170 staff and 256 pupils with a positive test).

Through providing support to settings in their contact tracing, the numbers of children and staff needing to isolate in response to a positive case has significantly reduced over time; meaning there is less impact on pupils' learning. We ran Public Health briefing sessions in November where schools shared the learning from their cases in order to help to continue to minimise infections and disruption to learning. As a significant number of pupils and teachers are isolating the support needed for schools is considerable.

5.40. Following the national lockdown on 5 November, all schools and colleges were asked to consider the new restrictions and to review and revise their risk assessments in line with these.

5.41. To enable us to provide information to the DfE on the impact of recent restrictions and the impact of the new lockdown measures, we asked all schools to complete an online survey in relation to current staff who are clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable. We had an 83% response rate to the survey in less than 24 hours. This provided the following intelligence:

- Workforce absences were a concern for 70% respondents, but they anticipated the school remaining fully open with the capacity for children to physically remain in school.
- 9% said the school is regularly experiencing significant absence and are close to the point where they may have to switch to rotas/remote teaching.
- The biggest workforce issue is teaching staff absence followed by teaching assistant absence followed by issues with supply cover.
- 19% have had issues with access to supply or temporary cover. This increases to 40% in our special schools.
- 55% said funding is a constraint but even with additional funding there are other, larger constraints to remaining fully open.
- 29% said funding is the biggest constraint in keeping the school fully open.

5.42. We are continuing to provide intensive support to schools around how to implement the DfE guidance to ensure we have a consistent and safe approach across all schools. An updated FAQ including advice on Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and Pregnant staff has been provided to schools by HR along with an updated Risk Assessment and guidance document. We have also shared information on why Down's syndrome adults, but not children have been added to the high-risk list and provided an easy read document helpful around why certain adults, and not children with the same conditions, have been added to the clinically extremely vulnerable list.

- 5.43. From 2 November we introduced Compulsory Face Coverings on School Transport for all students aged 11 and over, unless exempt. As part of lock down this became a requirement from 5 November.
- 5.44. We are seeing an increase in schools saying they will exclude pupils as they can't cope with the behaviour of children – some are our most vulnerable. We are working together with schools on this as a cross service approach to prevent exclusions wherever possible. To date, we have had two unavoidable exclusions due to serious one off incidents.
- 5.45. We have an increasing number of schools challenging why we are not issuing fixed penalty notices or fines for attendance. DfE guidance is clear that schools should consider any concerns from pupils, parents and households, who may be reluctant or anxious about attending school and put the right support in place to address this. However, the guidance also states that usual school attendance powers and duties continue to apply, including schools and local authorities' ability to use parental responsibility measures, such as fixed penalty notices, where appropriate. We continue to monitor absence on a case by case basis and offer support to schools to work with families to encourage attendance.
- 5.46. We have now established an Action Hub through 'Edtech' to support better use of IT in remote learning in schools. We have a group of 30+ schools involved in the first wave of schools in receiving a wide range of support to use Google or Microsoft platforms.
- 5.47. The focus of the National Tuition Programme (NTP) is on supporting disadvantaged pupils, including those eligible for Pupil Premium funding. However, participating schools will be able to decide which of their pupils will most benefit from additional support. A further aspect of this programme is academic mentors who again support vulnerable learners. All eligible schools have been supported to access this programme with CE schools having success in accessing the additional £19,000 as from January 2021 as part of wave 2.
- 5.48. We are providing targeted support for catch up in the core subjects through a programme of support commissioned through 'Literacy Counts' which consists of 20 sessions of training and development. A launch event was very well attended in early November on Reading, Writing and Phonics. We are now planning the launch of sessions on maths in early 2021.
- 5.49. A programme to support disadvantaged learners using the latest national research into the most effective practice has been commenced for around 15-20 schools. Priority schools have been approached to be part of this work which is led by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) who are the leading organisation in educational research.

5.50. We launched our Wellbeing in Education Programme in November. Each school will receive two training sessions which aim to empower key staff with knowledge, understanding and clear strategies, so that they can use these to influence school/college policy, procedures and responses in regard to supporting and enhancing wellbeing and resilience for all. This is a national training programme which we have tailored to meet our local needs. So far there has been good attendance from schools.

5.51. *Homelessness and Rough Sleepers* - From the 26th March 2020 to 31st October 2020 Housing have accommodated 185 households who presented to us as homeless and have placed them in emergency provision, predominately hotels who had agreed to continue to work with us. Of those 185:-

- 143 have successfully been moved on from the hotel placements into a mix of other accommodation, long and short-term provision.
- 14 Lost their accommodation due to their behaviour
- 12 abandoned the hotel or they disengaged.
- 16 are ongoing

5.52. Those accommodated were predominantly singles, but we also accommodated five families. As of 31 October 2020, we had 12 households in Bed and Breakfast and plans were in place to move those onto more appropriate accommodation

5.53. In addition to those placed in emergency accommodation the Housing Options Team have also prevented or relieved 602 from homelessness.

5.54. The Cheshire East Rough Sleepers Outreach team work proactively to support individuals who are rough sleeping. We are currently seeing the number fluctuate and are between 6 and 10 rough sleepers, located across the Local Authority.

5.55. With the introduction of new restrictions, the Housing team have been preparing for a possible increase in homelessness presentations and also the possibility of a further call from Government to bring Everyone in. This includes extending our accommodation solutions, tailoring them to meet a number of housing needs.

5.56. Cheshire East has been successful in securing funding through the Government's "Next Steps" programme. There were two funding streams, one providing short term funding to be used by March 2021 and Cheshire East has been awarded £56,000 to provide rent in advance and support to 38 individuals to enable them to access the private rented sector. Concrete, who is one of Cheshire East's commissioned Housing Support Providers, will be providing the support.

- 5.57. The second funding stream provides funding to secure additional accommodation. Housing submitted a bid in conjunction with the Plus Dane Group to enable them to purchase 8 properties to use for those with complex issues and to provide intensive support. Cheshire East was awarded £450,000 grant funding, with a requirement to provide £100,000 towards the purchase costs and the intensive support for 2 years at a cost of £119,700 per annum, both of which will be funded via our Flexible Homelessness Grant.
- 5.58. MHCLG have allowed us to re-profile some of our Rough Sleeping Intervention funding in order to support the short term bid and we are also undertaking a tendering exercise to develop a Fresh Start scheme, which will provide 6 units of accommodation and support for those with complex needs, with a history of offending.
- 5.59. The Housing Options team continues to work with landlords to prevent the increase in eviction rates. A number of early intervention plans have been put in place including establishing an early notification protocol with social housing providers in relation to tenants who are in arrears, looking at ways we can work together to prevent them from becoming homeless. We are working with the private landlords on our database providing information on assistance available for tenants in arrears and advice on how to get direct payments if they are on Universal Credit. We are also giving advice in respect of any anti-social behaviour and details of any changes to the legislation.
- 5.60. We are utilising our Homelessness Prevention funding to try and prevent evictions or assist those at threat of homelessness to access alternative accommodation
- 5.61. *Town Centres* - The monthly data reports on visits to town centres in the Borough's Principal Towns and Key Service Centres indicate that in October the majority of the Borough's centres experienced either a levelling off or a slight fall in visitor numbers from September. This may have been influenced by darker evenings but also could indicate an increase in nervousness due to rising Covid cases. When compared to the same month last year total visits in the Borough's centres ranged from -25% to + 23%. As with September, impacts on visits appear to be less severe than that recorded as a national average.
- 5.62. *Tatton Park* - Tatton Park's attractions reopened on a phased basis from 3rd June 2020 when the Parkland reopened. Adjustments to visiting arrangements were made, such as pre-booked visits to Garden, Farm and Mansion, to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience, complying with national guidance and to maintaining best practice. Since then Tatton has been a popular visitor destination with its outdoor attractions doing well. The continuing appetite for visits to the outdoors has also seen an increase in visitor numbers in Cheshire East's country parks and countryside sites.

- 5.63. Overall since June, paid visits at Tatton Park have been 42% up on the same period last year despite the lack of the major outdoor events. However, like comparable indoor attractions elsewhere, the Mansion did not see such an uplift, with visitors focusing more on outdoor elements of a visit. The Mansion closed at the end of September and apart from the October half-term, is now closed for the winter.
- 5.64. Taking account of restrictions, national guidance and recent visitor trends, Tatton's popular Christmas events have been redesigned. The Christmas Mansion will not take place in 2020 but is replaced for this year with a Christmas event in the gardens. Christmas at the Farm has been reconfigured to take account of the need to be Covid-secure but is able to continue on a pre-booked basis, with all slots now sold-out.
- 5.65. The recent lockdown has had an impact on Tatton, with closure of the Farm attraction, Gardener's Cottage tearoom and non-essential shops. The Parkland, Gardens, take-away food and the Housekeeper's Store food shop have remained open in line with government guidance. The closure of the Farm has led to a reduction of 28% in paid visits overall and led to cancellation of its first Christmas event weekend (Nov 28th/29th). Since lockdown, the Parkland and Gardens have continued to do well, remaining 37% and 26% up on the equivalent period last year
- 5.66. *Business Support* - On Business Grants, the Government announced four new grant funds to support business since the introduction of the Local Covid Alert Level (LCAL) and the national lockdown. These grants have an estimated total value of £15,262,935.
- 5.67. The grants are different to those that the Council received during Lockdown1. A brief explanation of each grant is:
- 5.68. Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) - The grant amount £6,520,842 and is 90% of the estimated grant funding requirement, calculated using Valuation Office Agency data. This grant is to support those businesses that are required to close as a result of the national restrictions and have a business property that has a rateable value as determined by the Valuation Office Agency. It will be a one-off payment for the four-week national lockdown period, with the amount payable dependent on the rateable value of the business premises. The Council has no discretion over this grant and will make payments to eligible businesses in line with the government guidance.
- 5.69. Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) - The grant amount is £1,059,053, it is part of the wider set of measures to support businesses in response to Coronavirus (Covid-19) and specifically for businesses that were still open but have been severely impacted by Local Covid Alert Levels 'High' (LCAL 2) and

'Very High' (LCAL 3) restrictions since 1 August to 4 November 2020. Cheshire East entered Local Covid Alert Level 'High' (Tier 2) on 14th October. The grant funding will therefore cover the 22-day period from 14 October to 4 November 2020. The Grant is aimed at hospitality, accommodation and leisure businesses in the Local Authority geography, there is a small discretionary element to this grant of 5%

- 5.70. Local Restrictions Support Grant (Sectors) - This grant scheme is to support eligible businesses that have been required to close and have been unable to reopen since 23 March 2020. This includes nightclubs, dance halls and discotheques, adult entertainment venues and hostess bars. Grant funding for eligible businesses will be payable by Local Authorities in 14-day payment cycles with eligibility starting on 1 November 2020, the scheme will close when LRSG (closed) comes into effect on 5 November 2020. The Council has no discretion over this grant and will make payments to eligible businesses in line with the government guidance.
- 5.71. Additional Restrictions Grant - Local Authorities will receive a one-off lump sum payment amounting to £20 per head. This amounts to a total of £7,683,040 in Cheshire East. The funding can be used across financial years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. Once a Local Authority exits national or LCAL 3 restrictions they will not receive additional funding under this grant scheme if the Local Authority then re-enters national or LCAL 3 restrictions. It is expected this grant will primarily take the form of discretionary grants, but Local Authorities could also use this funding for wider business support activities.
- 5.72. A new policy for the discretionary grants has been developed and to simplify the process for businesses, a single application has been put in place. This application is available on the Council's website and it went live on the 16 November. The Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG) are being administered by the rates team and the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) by Economic Development, at the time of writing (19/11/20) the Council has received 1662 applications for grant, 1437 for LRSG and 225 for ARG.
- 5.73. *Leisure Centres and Libraries* have temporarily closed in accordance with the legislation for the second lockdown. The legislation does provide some exceptions, and consequently 3 libraries continue to provide access for work clubs half a day a week on an appointment basis. Leisure Centres co-located on school premises continue to provide access for schools where required.
- 5.74. Everybody Sport & Recreation has seen very significant reductions in its income due to the pandemic, with receipts from fees and charges effectively reduced to zero during periods of closure required under lockdown rules. Whilst the Trust has strived to manage down its expenditure – including furloughing staff – it has been necessary for the Council to provide advance payments of

management fee to Everybody Sport and Recreation to ensure service continuity for the Council's leisure centres during and after the coronavirus pandemic.

- 5.75. With the second lockdown, the latest views of post pandemic recovery and most recent estimates of the operating position for the Trust, it is clear that without further financial support they will not be able to meet their costs and liabilities through to March 2021. Whilst there is a prospect of Government funding from the recently announced £100m support package for public leisure centres – which may replace the aid provided by the Council, in due course – it is considered essential that the Trust is given assurance as regards support to help maintain its cash flow, at this time; and it is therefore recommended that a Supplementary Revenue Estimate is provided of £500,000, to provide a budget for an additional management fee payment to Everybody Sport & Recreation Trust in 2020/21.
- 5.76. *Kerbside waste and recycling* collections continue as normal. In a change from the first lockdown, Household Waste and Recycling Centres are permitted to remain open.
- 5.77. The risk of increased demand on *Bereavement Services* from Covid related deaths continues to be monitored. Contingency plans are in place to increase the number of cremations that can be undertaken each day by lengthening the working day and shortening service durations if required.
- 5.78. The new guidance and legislation for the second lockdown has led to an increase in enquiries and complaints to Regulatory Services as the list of businesses that must close is not comprehensive. However, compliance by businesses across the borough with the new regulations is generally good, with Regulatory Services providing advice and guidance initially to encourage compliance, but ready to follow up with formal enforcement action if required.
- 5.79. *Highways, Transport & Parking* - The Government have announced the outcome of the bid process for the second tranche of Active Travel funding. For the borough, an indicative allocation of £612,000 was provided and the award is £588,000. The difference this time is the term “emergency” has been removed from the fund and there is a requirement to demonstrate consultation activity. The schemes will be brought forward integrated with the Council's existing active travel programmes.
- 5.80. *Parking* use has dropped in this second lockdown to around 30 to 40% of pre COVID levels but this is much higher than the first lockdown. Consideration is being given to what support could be provided to attract people back into our towns once the situation around COVID makes this feasible.

- 5.81. *Travel on public and community transport* has dropped as we enter into the second lockdown but, as with parking, travel in the borough remains significantly higher than in the first lockdown. Concessionary bus travel and the use of the Council's FlexiLink service is lower but still remain important services for essential journeys for these residents. All services are applying the COVID rules put in place to seek to control the rate of infection.
- 5.82. *Highways maintenance operations* and the construction of the borough's infrastructure programme is continuing, applying the COVID rules and regulations. The borough has a significant on-going programme of works and the team and our contractors are successfully delivering despite the changes that have had to be put in place, in particular on site. Construction activity relating to utility works and housing development sites as it affects the borough's roads is higher than pre COVID levels placing an increased workload on the team.
- 5.83. *Workforce and Workplace* - Those staff who can work from home were encouraged to do so when the lockdown was introduced in March. That has continued to be the case as the situation has evolved. We have made a significant investment in mobile IT to allow staff to operate as effectively remotely. As at 17 November, 95% of staff have been migrated. However, to support services who need more flexibility to continue to deliver services while still working under COVID-19 restrictions, we have introduced team zones which allocated spaces within our buildings that will be carefully managed by heads of service. We continue to communicate with staff on a regular basis and have had positive feedback on this.
- 5.84. Frontline staff continue to deliver services with adjustments to working practices in line with the COVID guidelines to ensure they are protected from the virus as far as practicable. In some areas this has added to the cost of running the service, with the purchase of additional PPE and vehicles for example. Staff also continue to work flexibly and divert from their normal duties to support the Council's varied roles on COVID.
- 5.85. We are continuing to monitor COVID-19 related absences on a regular basis, including the numbers of staff self-isolating and/or off sick. As at 19 November 2020, there are currently 36 staff self-isolating and working from home, 32 staff self-isolating not working from home, 13 staff with COVID related sick absences and 89 staff off with non-COVID related sickness. The enduring nature of the pandemic is leading to increased feedback from staff about fatigue. We are encouraging staff to take leave and making available a range of well-being support.
- 5.86. *Governance and Decision Making* - The Council moved quickly to facilitate remote meetings. All Members were provided with laptops and support to

operate effectively. Formal meetings are taking place remotely as standard now, including two remote Council meetings. A survey of Members, overseen by the Members Forum, has gathered helpful feedback on the use of the technology. Members have responded positively to the changes and the support they have received. Advice and guidance has been provided in terms of accessing office buildings, risk assessment and adapting to remote working on a longer term basis.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

Legal Implications

- 6.1. The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. Any necessary urgent decisions have followed the process set out in the Constitution.
- 6.4. Local authority meetings - on Friday 31 July 2020, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 came into force and will expire on 7 May 2021 unless extended. It removes the requirements to hold annual meetings; allows councils to hold all necessary meetings virtually, to alter the frequency and occurrence of meetings, without the requirement for further notice and to enable members, officers and the public to attend and access meetings and associated documents remotely. However, the amended regulations do not specifically mention 'hybrid' meetings.
- 6.5. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No 3) Regulations 2020 came into force on 18 July 2020 and will expire at the end of 17 January 2021. They give local authorities (LA) power to give directions which impose prohibitions, requirements or restrictions relating to premises, events and public

outdoor spaces, more commonly known as local lockdowns in order to tackle local coronavirus outbreaks. The LA must ensure the conditions set out in the Regulations are met before it can give such a Direction. It must also have regard to advice from its Director of Public Health when deciding whether or not to make a Direction. If a Direction is made, the Secretary of State (SoS) must be notified as soon as reasonably practicable, and the Direction must be reviewed at least once every seven days to ensure the conditions for making it are still met. Similarly, the SoS has the power to direct a LA to make a Direction under the Regulations, if the SoS considers the conditions for making a Direction are met.

- 6.6. Directions relating to premises may require closure of premises, restriction of entry or restrictions relating to the location of persons in the premises. A LA may not make a Direction relating to premises which form part of essential infrastructure.
- 6.7. Directions may be given in relation to specified events or events of a specified description.
- 6.8. If the LA gives a direction which imposes a prohibition, requirement or restriction on a person specified by name, the LA must give notice in writing to that person and also publish the notice to bring to the attention of persons who may be affected by it. Persons who are given a direction under the Regulations have a right of appeal against the direction to a magistrate's court and also to make representations to the SoS.
- 6.9. LA designated officers and constables have enforcement powers. Persons who contravene directions under the Regulations or obstruct persons carrying out functions under the Regulations commit offences.
- 6.10. Officers continue to consider both formal Regulations and Guidance issued by Government which informs the Council's approach to the relevant subject matter. By way of example, the government's advice on COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of council buildings was updated on the 9th September 2020. See link for full details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings>

- 6.11. Particular reference is drawn to section 3c 'Meetings' which states:

"We continue to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally, without the need for face-to-face contact, they should do so. Where council buildings need to be used for physical meetings, these meetings must be managed within the social distancing guidance and principles set out above."

- 6.12. As referenced in para. 7.1.4 above, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 enable remote meetings. The key question to consider in all cases would be, is it necessary to holding face to face meetings in council buildings? Such risk assessment would need to consider the availability of alternative methods, i.e. virtual meetings, the risk and data pertaining to infection rates both locally and nationally, any particular local considerations and vulnerabilities of those who may be impacted by a decision, and equality considerations when considering the necessity if it should hold in person meetings.
- 6.13. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 14th September 2020, amended the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020, so that people may not participate in social gatherings, in any place, in groups of more than 6, unless they are members of the same household, two linked households, or exceptions apply. The changes apply to England, in so far as an area isn't subject to additional or enhanced restrictions by way of are specific regulations.
- 6.14. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Obligations of Hospitality Undertakings) (England) Regulations 2020, came into force on 18th September 2020 by way of emergency Regulations. The Regulations make provision for requirements for pubs, restaurants, cafes and other businesses involved in providing food for consumption on the premises to take reasonable steps or measures to limit customers to parties of six, and to keep tables an appropriate distance apart.
- 6.15. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Collection of Contact Details etc and Related Requirements) Regulations 2020 came into force on 18 September 2020, again by way of emergency Regulations. The Regulations make provisions requiring designated venues to collect certain contact details mainly from customers, visitors and staff (as set out in the regulations), store this information for 21 days, and share it with NHS Test and Trace or local public health officials, if requested. This is with the purpose of enabling NHS Test and Trace and local public health officials to contact people who may have been exposed to coronavirus and give them appropriate public health advice to help stop the further spread of the virus.
- 6.16. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level) (High) (England) Regulations 2020 were made on 12 October 2020 and came into force on 14 October 2020. Cheshire East Council fell within the area covered by these Regulations, known as Tier Two restricted areas. In general, these regulations make provision for local restrictions in the affected areas in terms

of social interaction and operation of some businesses. People must not socialise with anybody outside of their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place, nor must they socialise in a group of more than 6 outside, including in a garden or other space like beaches or parks. The Regulations make provision for certain lawful exceptions to these restrictions. Similarly, businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, other than those which remain closed in law. Certain businesses selling food or drink on their premises are required to close between 10pm and 5am. Businesses and venues selling food for consumption off the premises, can continue to do so after 10pm as long as this is through delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-thru. Schools, universities and places of worship remain open. Weddings and funerals can go ahead with restrictions on the number of attendees. People can continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, for work or to access education, but should look to reduce the number of journeys they make where possible. There is also an expectation that any national guidance in place at the time will be followed for example the wearing of face masks where mandated and maintaining social distancing. The Regulations make provision for a constable, a police community support officer or a person designated by a local authority, to enforce the regulations, with any offence/breach being punishable by a fixed penalty notice fine, which operates on an increasing scale should there be repeated breaches of the regulations. The fines can be levied against individual, or businesses who fail to adhere to the regulations.

- 6.17. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 are in force between 5 November 2020; expiring on 2 December 2020 and provide for a temporary 28 day lockdown. People must not leave or be outside of their home without 'reasonable excuse'. 'Reasonable excuse' to leave one's home includes: shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine (Schedule 3) Reg 6(2)(a), to exercise outdoors or visit an outdoor public place - with the people you live with, with your support bubble or, when on your own. Additionally, you must not meet socially indoors with family or friends unless they are part of same household or support bubble. Outdoor public places include parks, beaches, countryside, public gardens, allotments, playgrounds.
- 6.18. Places of Worship will be closed with minor exceptions, funerals or essential voluntary and public services, such as blood donation or food banks. Other exempted activities include some support groups education, voluntary or charitable work or providing emergency assistance.
- 6.19. Visiting relatives in care homes – specific guidance has now been published <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

which supplements the legal position set out in the health Protection (Coronavirus, restrictions)(England)(No.4) Regulations 2020 and requires all decisions to be taken in light of general legal obligations e.g. Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 as applicable. Enforcement is by a person so designated by the local authority and is a 'relevant person' for the purpose of enforcement under the Regulations (Reg. 19(11)(b)(iii)). Matters against which a LA may enforce are constrained to Regulations 15 – 18 inclusive. The provisions broadly align with those in place during the first lockdown and local authorities are limited to matters concerning business restriction. Methods of Enforcement include Prohibition Notice and Fixed Penalty Notices.

Financial Implications

- 6.20. The potential financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been reported to Cabinet each month since July with the October update including the additional link to the Council's underlying budget performance in 2020/21. Members outside of Cabinet have received briefings via the Audit and Governance and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committees or direct Member briefing. This report presents the latest financial position and identifies Government funding already provided or claimed to date.
- 6.21. Significant levels of uncertainty remain over the potential financial implications for local authorities. The financial issues facing Cheshire East Council are just part of an ongoing national issue for public services, and the whole UK economy. Central Government continues to react with funding support packages for both general and specific purposes. The Council continues to support MHCLG in gathering evidence, on a monthly basis, of the potential costs and income losses for 2020/21 based on information and guidance available at the date of the Government return. The information from the Council contributes to the ongoing negotiations between the LGA, MHCLG, HM Treasury and other Government Departments and sector-led organisations such as the County Councils Network.
- 6.22. The nature of financial issues, and the approach to funding costs and income losses associated with the pandemic, has inevitably changed over time as the severity of the pandemic has changed. This creates issues with producing an accurate forecast of financial consequences compared to the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy which had been approved by Council on 20 February 2020.
- 6.23. The returns to Central Government identify three main types of financial pressure:

- (i) **Un-ringfenced Expenditure and Income Losses**
The most recent forecast of financial pressures from COVID-19 on the Council's 2020/21 budget for Services is £33m. The figures are under monthly review and expenditure is expected to rise with the rising number of infection cases. Grant funding to support expenditure and income losses is detailed in Table 1 below, in a format consistent with previous reports. £25m of un-ringfenced Support Grant has been allocated to date; and £2.1m has also been claimed so far under the Income Compensation Scheme and is pending analysis before payment. The Government has also announced that £100m has been top sliced from national grant provision totals to provide support to keeping leisure centres open; and a claims process to access this funding will be announced shortly.
- (ii) **Collection Fund**
Potential losses on the Collection Fund relate to Council Tax and Business Rates income. At the time of writing, the Council expects to have to bear these losses. Latest guidance from Government requires councils to spread the impact over the next three years. However, there is ongoing consideration from MHCLG and the LGA on this issue and further information will be provided when it is available. Cash shortfalls in-year are expected to be in the region of £9.6m. The Council will continue to recover late payments where practicable, however some losses will be permanent; for example, where businesses have ceased trading, individuals are now entitled to Council Tax Support Payments, or where growth in the tax base has slowed down compared to forecasts.
- (iii) **Ringfenced Expenditure**
Table 2 provides information about the activities the Council has been undertaking which have received specific Government funding.

Table 1: The approach to un-ringfenced funding has changed over time

Announced	Funding for CEC	Notes
(England total)		
19th March	£9.150m (£1.6bn)	Adult Social Care based payment
18th April	£10.539m (£1.6bn)	Payment per capita to help reflect lost income
Sub-Total	£19.689m (£3.2bn)	
2nd July	£2.712m (£0.5bn)	Adult Social Care / deprivation based payment
12th October	£2.578m (£1bn)	To provide resources for winter. This tranche of funding has been used to equalise all payments using the same approach as the July payment.
Total	£24.979m (of £4.6bn)	
2nd July	£6.1m (£n/k) for Income Compensation	Estimated total – subject to claims process. £2.1m claimed so far, in 1 st of 3 data collection rounds Compensation at 75p in £1 for losses above 5% of sales, fees and charges budgets
2nd July	£nil for Collection Fund	Defer Collection Fund Deficit over 3yrs

6.21 Un-ringfenced government funding received to date as detailed in Table 1 (above) is currently **£25m, of which £1m was utilised in 2019/20**; and the income compensation scheme is anticipated to bring in **£6.1m**, if settled in full. Including for £9.6m of losses on the Collection Fund, it is currently estimated that there is a shortfall for the Council of c. **£13m**. However, the financial impact is increasing, due to increasing number of cases of COVID-19, and at this point it is not clear whether the forecast shortfall will change; it will be subject to ongoing analysis and review.

6.22 Mindful of the possibility for further expenditure/ net cost pressures going forward, it will be important to continue to review, understand and mitigate the potential shortfall between additional financial impacts and the funding provided by Government. The Council continues to engage in several activities:

1. Managing and reviewing the financial forecasts in response to guidance and the local response to the emergency, and how this affects the Council's revenue budget
2. Further analysing the Government proposals to compensate losses from Sales, Fees and Charges
3. Analysing the level of Collection Fund losses across the three financial years 2021/22 to 2023/24
4. Reviewing the consequences of funding shortfalls on the Council's Capital Programme and how this impacts on the Council's long-term funding of capital expenditure

Table 2: Specific Grants are valued at c.£198m

Activity (National Total)	Spending forecast*	Funding	Variance
Test & Trace (£300m)	£1,533,331	£1,533,331	£0
Towns Fund (Capital £5bn)	£750,000	£750,000	£0
Dedicated Home to School and College Transport (£40m)	£294,536	£294,536	£0
Rough Sleeping/ Next Steps Accommodation (£3.2m + £91.5m +£10m + £105m)	£158,516	£51,000	£107,516
Active Travel (£225m)	£743,050	£743,050	£0
Re-Opening High Streets (£50m)	£339,533	£339,533	£0
Culture Recovery Fund (£1.57bn)	£180,000	£180,000	£0
Infection Control (£600m)	£5,320,292	£5,320,292	£0
Business Grants (£12.3bn)**	£87,445,000 (spending to date)	£95,514,000	Awaiting guidance
Discretionary Business Grants (£617m)**	£4,357,000 (spending to date)	£4,372,250	

Local Restrictions Business Support Grants **	£15,262,935	£15,262,935	
Business Rate Holiday (£10.7bn)	£62,339,000	£60,561,068	£1,777,932
Council Tax Hardship (£500m)	£2,691,326	£2,062,635	£628,691
Local Bus Network (£167m)	£229,632	£229,632	£0
Emergency Assistance Food and basic necessities (£63m)	£326,293	£326,293	£0
Contain Outbreak Management Fund (£n/k)	£3,073,216	£3,073,216	£0
School Condition Grant (Capital) (£n/k)	£589,604	£589,604	£0
Wellbeing for Education Return (£8m)	£55,403	£55,403	£0
Compliance and Enforcement Grant (£60m)	£158,572	£158,572	£0
Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme (£254m)	£299,634	£305,467	(£5,833)
Self Isolation Test and Trace Support Payment (n/k)	£250,979	£250,979	£0
Infection Control in Care Homes (£546m) 2 nd Tranche	£4,712,872	£4,712,872	£0
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (£32m)	£210,000	£210,000	£0
Covid Winter Grant Scheme (£170m)	£880,472	£880,472	£0
Domestic Abuse Building Capacity Fund (£6m)	£50,000	£50,000	£0
Leisure Centres (£100m)	£n/k	£n/k (pending claims process)	£n/k

*Note: where 'Spending Forecast' equals 'Funding' this does not necessarily indicate the full extent of spending but does demonstrate the expectation that funding will be fully utilised.

**Business Grant scheme funding has been combined to date. Scheme totals can also vary if payments are subject to review or appeal

6.2.3 Further specific grants may become payable and require local administration in response to the emerging status of the pandemic response.

6.2.4 LGA and CCN collate returns from all member councils, though the types of financial pressure vary from council to council depending on their circumstances. For example, whether they provide social care, have a strong tourist economy, or the extent of deprivation. The overall impacts are similar across councils and Cheshire East Council is not an outlier. The Council will continue to support lobbying by the LGA and CCN in their aim to ensure fair settlement of the financial pressures facing local authorities

6.2.5 As noted in Table 2 above, the Council has been allocated £880,472 in respect of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme; this is for extra targeted financial support to those in need over the winter period, to provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. A Supplementary Revenue Estimate is required to be approved, in respect of the expenditure to be incurred, as fully funded by the grant, and the matter is included as a recommendation in this report.

6.2.6 As noted in 5.74-5.75, it is recommended that a Supplementary Revenue Estimate is approved of £500,000, to provide a budget for an additional management fee payment to Everybody Sport and Recreation Trust to maintain its cash flow. This will be fully funded from the un-ringfenced Covid-19 Emergency Grant for Local Government.

6.3 Policy Implications

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

6.5 Equality Implications

6.6 Implications of the changes will continue to be reviewed. We are carrying out individual risk assessments for staff with protected characteristics, particularly in relation to BAME colleagues and staff with a disability.

6.7 Human Resources Implications

6.8 The report provides 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.

6.9 Risk Management Implications

6.10 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 of EU Exit and winter pressures.

6.11 Rural Communities Implications

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

6.13 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

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

6.15 Public Health Implications

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

6.17 Climate Change Implications

6.18 There 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.

7 Ward Members Affected

7.1 All Members.

8 Consultation & Engagement

8.1 Formal consultation activities were initially paused due to the lockdown restrictions. We are reviewing on a case by case basis to ensure that we can continue to operate effectively.

9 Access to Information

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

10 Contact Information

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

Frank Jordan, Executive Director Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director People

Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services