

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 September 2021
<b>Report Title:</b>	Covid-19 Update
<b>Report of:</b>	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
<b>Report Reference No.</b>	CP/51/21-22
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All

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### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1** COVID-19 is an enduring national and international public health emergency. Members have been kept informed through regular reports and briefings on how the Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and plan for the recovery from it. This report summarises recent developments on an exception basis.
- 1.2** The Government published a document called “COVID-19 Response Spring 2021” which includes a “roadmap” for easing restrictions in England,  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/963491/COVID-19\\_Response\\_-\\_Spring\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963491/COVID-19_Response_-_Spring_2021.pdf)
- 1.3** At the time of writing step 4 has been instigated. At step 4, whilst many of the legal restrictions that the Government imposed through the pandemic have been lifted, the pandemic is not over. The Council and its partners have continued to encourage caution and restraint whilst managing the risk of Covid. The implications for council activities are summarised in section 5.
- 1.4** The National Audit Office (NAO) published a report on Initial Learning from the Government’s response to COVID-19 [Initial learning from the](#)

[government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic \(nao.org.uk\)](https://www.nao.org.uk). This report contains some useful insights for local authorities and which Members of the Committee may wish to consider. (section 7)

- 1.5 The response to and recovery from the pandemic contributes to the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25

## 2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the report.

## 3.0 Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 This report is part of the Council's commitment to being open and transparent.

## 4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Not appropriate.

## 5. Background

### Update and by exception reporting 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 key changes since July is provided below.

- 5.3 **COVID infection rates** – COVID Infection rates vary across the UK with some areas experiencing increasing numbers of new cases that appear to be related to a variant that was first identified in India (the Delta variant). Several areas in the Northwest region such as Blackburn and Bolton have seen significant increases in their rates. In such areas surge testing and targeted vaccination programmes have been introduced.

- 5.4 At present Cheshire East is seeing a reduction in new infection rates from a high of nearly 500 cases per 100,000 population over a seven day period down to 263 rate per 100,000 (1,017 cases) over the last seven days as of 17 August 2021. Whilst Cheshire East's rates have consistently been among the lowest in the Cheshire and Merseyside sub region there is still a need for the local population to continue to follow COVID safety guidance and to be fully vaccinated. COVID pressures on our local hospitals with regard to admissions is lower than in previous waves, however non-COVID

occupancy is higher and pressures on Emergency Departments remains very high.

**5.5** As of 21 August 2021, there were 292,989 residents registered with Cheshire GP Practices who have received their first Dose (86.6% of the eligible population of Cheshire East residents) and 264,840 (78.3%) who have received their second Dose. The rates within Electoral Wards range from 61.0% - 91.0%. Some of this variation is due to some wards having a significantly younger age profile and therefore only became eligible for vaccination later in the schedule. Targetted efforts are in place to assist harder to reach sections of our communities to access vaccination.

### **5.6 Test Trace Contain Enable/Swab squad**

As of 26 July 2021, Cheshire East is no longer classed as an Enhanced Response Area (ERA) as the Delta variant is now the prevalent variant across England. As such, Cheshire East no longer has access to the same level of national support for test and trace. The national rollout of step 4 of the lockdown roadmap has had a significant impact on the Test Trace Contain Enable Programme as a number of national testing initiatives and almost all Covid-19 measures are no longer mandatory. As such, there has been a significant rise, and subsequent fall, of Covid-19 cases locally. There have been a number of operational issues caused by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), in respect of both test and trace, and the lack of a national strategy is still a major cause for concern. The TTCE Programme is now in the process of planning for autumn/winter. This involves being as proactive as possible but with a significant caveat that the DHSC often change things with little or no notice. This is an issue that has been escalated by Directors of Public Health at a regional level. In autumn, testing will be more focused on under-served and under-represented groups and see a move from fixed onsite testing to a mobile testing operation. Autumn will also see the re-implementation of local contact tracing now that issues have been somewhat resolved with DHSC.

### **5.7 Roadmap out of lockdown step 4 from 19 July**

**5.7.1** Key protections have remained in place, including testing, self-isolation and the roll-out of vaccinations. Individuals and businesses and those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable have been encouraged to adopt risk-based approaches.

**5.7.2** Cheshire East Council has continued to work to ensure that people can still feel safe, despite the easing of restrictions and greater freedoms that many will welcome. Council services directly affected by changes include:

- 5.7.3 Education** – Step 4 of the government’s roadmap brought in a number of changes for education settings, including changes to requirements around the use of face coverings for staff and pupils (Year 7 and above) in classrooms and communal areas, use of bubbles, educational visits, extra-curricular activity, transition days, school transport arrangements, testing and contact tracing. The Council worked closely with leaders from education settings through the Education Recovery Group, unions and the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) to provide clear guidance for schools, colleges and parent carers around these changes both during the summer term and in readiness for the autumn term.
- 5.7.4** From 19 July education settings were no longer required to carry out contact tracing or identify close contacts; this responsibility switched to NHS Test and Trace. The local authority still has a role to work closely with settings around local outbreaks and we have provided education settings with updated risk assessment checklists and guidance on developing their outbreak management plans to reduce the risks of COVID-19.
- 5.7.5** Asymptomatic testing continues to be important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. Over the summer, most staff and secondary pupils were not required to test regularly unless they were attending settings that remain open, such as summer schools and out of school activities based in school settings. However, as pupils potentially mix with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary school pupils were asked to receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term. The local authority has supported schools in a number of ways including carrying out the testing of the new Year 7 pupils so that they can spend their first day in school on transition and settling in activities rather than testing, identification and training of volunteers to help with the school testing and telephone and in-person support and advice on running their test site and advising on actions to be taken as a consequence of any results.
- 5.7.6** Due to the changes in social distancing restrictions, the government funding for additional dedicated school transport was also removed from the start of the autumn term. Whilst wearing face coverings is no longer a legal requirement on public transport, the government expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces. This recommendation includes the use of face

coverings for children and young people aged 11 and over when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college.

**5.7.7 Children's Social Care** – as a result of the pandemic there are significant pressures nationally on the number of placements available for cared for children and young people. This means we are experiencing significant challenges in finding the right homes for a small number of our cared for children and young people, and this is also impacting on the cost of placements. Demand to Children's Social Care overall has also increased.

**5.7.8 Adult social care** – There are significant pressures on the Care at Home market caused by a combination of increased demand for domiciliary care, recruitment and retention challenges and staff having to self isolate. This is impacting on timely discharges from the hospitals and the ability to source care for people in short term care and in the community. The challenges are not confined to Cheshire East and many other local authorities in the region and nationally report similar issues. A working group has been set up to address the issues and support the market. This includes a task force to assess risk of staffing shortages for each provider to prevent handbacks, utilising the People Helping People service to provide low level support and reduce care packages and working with care homes to assess whether they are able to support the Care at Home market e.g. via provision of day services.

**5.7.9** Covid 19 vaccinations will become mandatory for care home staff on 11 November 2021. Currently 92% of staff working in Cheshire East care homes have received the first dose of the vaccination and 85% have had the second vaccination. Several care providers have embarked on staff consultation exercises over mandatory vaccinations since the Government announcement and a clinically led staff webinar across Cheshire has been held, resulting in the proportion of staff receiving the first dose of the vaccination increasing.

**5.7.10 Registration services and bereavement services (Orbitas)** – Legal restrictions on the number of people allowed to attend funerals, wakes and weddings have been lifted. Instead, it will be determined by how many people the COVID-secure venue can safely accommodate with social distancing.

**5.7.11 Library and Leisure services**– The removal of limits on social contact and restrictions on how many people can meet indoors has enabled more activities within our libraries and leisure centres to

resume. The requirement to pre-book slots for gym workouts or swimming have been removed. The optional use of face coverings for staff and customers is encouraged.

**5.7.12 Tatton Park** – All facilities are now open. Visit the website for information.: [www.tattonpark.org.uk/home.aspx](http://www.tattonpark.org.uk/home.aspx)

**5.7.13 Support for businesses** – The council’s economic development and regulatory services teams are continuing to provide advice and guidance to hospitality, events and tourism businesses to support the many changes in those sectors following the release of restrictions on 19 July:

- The [‘Say Hi to the High Street’ campaign](#) continues to be positively received, and the Council will continue to work with Town & Parish Council’s over the coming months to identify promotion and marketing opportunities to support Town Centres utilising the Government’s ‘Welcome Back Fund’.
- The Regulatory Services team continues to support and advise businesses to follow working safely during coronavirus guidance. Most of the Council’s powers to ensure compliance with the Coronavirus Regulations have been revoked. However, the amended regulations grant Councils powers, until 27 September 2021, to make directions in response to a serious and imminent threat to public health that limit the spread of Covid-19 in an individual premise, event, or public outdoor place. This could, for example, include requirements to wear face masks and limit social contact in an individual premise. Any direction must be necessary and proportionate in order to manage the transmission of coronavirus in the local authority’s area.

## **5.8 Business Grants Update**

**5.8.1** The Council successfully achieved full spend of its allocation of Additional Restrictions Grant (£11.1M) within the Government’s deadline and a total of 5296 grants were paid out from this allocation.

**5.8.2** On 30 July the Council received a further ‘top-up’ grant of £3.4M.

**5.8.3** A revised policy has been taken forward for the administration of this further grant, and that will seek to:

- provide support for business impacted by the delayed release of restrictions from 21 June 2021 to 19 July 2021, most notably this would support those in the travel sector;
- assist businesses severely impacted by disruptions brought about through the need of staff to self-isolate; and
- establish grants to support and stimulate business growth and recovery.

**5.8.4** The grant must be fully spent by 31 March 2022.

## **5.9 Future Workplace and engagement**

**5.9.1** Throughout the pandemic, we have provided frequent briefings to staff through a variety of methods. This includes written briefings, Conversation With/Question and Answer sessions, team meetings, TLC calls and wellbeing support. As referenced in the report to the July meeting of the Corporate Policy Committee, the Pulse Survey of staff reported positive feedback on how informed staff have felt. We are continuing to prioritise communication and engagement over the coming months.

**5.9.2** Members will be aware that the pandemic has had a significant impact on formal meetings. The Council moved quickly to enable remote meetings, rolling out lap-tops to all Members to allow the democratic processes to continue. The regulations allowing formal decision-making through remote meetings expired in early May. Members have been incredibly flexible and accommodating to adapt to the face to face meetings where they have been required.

**5.9.3** Covid-19 has been a catalyst for an emerging Future Workplace Strategy. We are taking a phased and pragmatic approach, engaging with and listening to staff about new ways of working which meet customer, service and individual needs. The high rates of infection have meant we are proceeding at a slower pace than envisaged. Further information on Phase 2 is now being finalised.

## **5.10 Recovery planning**

**5.10.1** At the sub-regional level, the strategic command for the response to the pandemic has been transferred to a strategic recovery co-ordinating group. This is a multi-agency group that brings together key partners including local government, health, police, the local enterprise partnership and enables feedback to central government.



**5.10.2** This group is chaired by the Chief Executive of Cheshire East Council and oversees a sub-regional approach to the ongoing management of the pandemic, managing the easing of restrictions and planning for longer term recovery.

**5.10.3** The council has therefore developed a recovery plan to support this sub-regional approach as well as ensuring the Borough continues to manage the pandemic effectively as well as recovery arrangements.

**5.10.4** In particular the recovery plan anticipates and is preparing the Council to manage the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Borough and on our council services. For example, it is anticipated that there will be significant long-term impacts on communities and business in Cheshire East.

**5.10.5** The key issues, risks and plans that have been developed at this stage cover:

- The ongoing management of COVID-19 including test, trace, contain and enable
- Supporting children and young people including ensuring an effective education recovery, managing increased demand on social care and supporting mental health
- Meeting the increased demands on adult social care, health and community services
- Putting effective arrangements in place to provide guidance and support to local businesses to ensure they operate safely and in line with the regulations
- Leading an effective economic recovery

## **6. Consultation and Engagement**

**6.1** Formal consultation activities were initially paused due to the lockdown restrictions. However, we are now undertaking all consultations following a review on a case by case basis to ensure that we can continue to operate effectively.

## **7. National Audit Office report: lessons learned**

**7.1** To date, the National Audit Office (NAO) has published 17 reports focusing on key parts of the response where there is scope for government to learn lessons from Covid-19. Their latest report brings together their initial thoughts on this learning across six themes: risk management; transparency and public trust; data and evidence; coordination and



delivery models; supporting and protecting people; and financial and workforce pressures. These NAO themes are summarised below.

The Executive Summary states that “the COVID-19 pandemic has stress-tested the government’s ability to deal with unforeseen events and potential shocks. Government has often acted at unprecedented speed to respond to a virus which has caused dramatic disruption to people’s lives, public service provision and society as a whole. Government had to continue to deliver essential public services, while reprioritising resources to deliver its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting staff to work from home. In its response, government has had to streamline decision-making, work across departments and public bodies and use a range of delivery structures. Departments will need to reflect on the lessons learned to ensure that they capitalise on the benefits and opportunities these new ways of working have brought. While the response to the pandemic has provided new learning from both what has worked well and what has not worked well, it has also laid bare existing fault lines within society, such as the risk of widening inequalities, and within public service delivery and government itself. The relationship between adult social care and the NHS, workforce shortages, the challenges posed by legacy data and IT systems, and the financial pressure felt by parts of the system all require long-term solutions.”

“The challenges posed by the pandemic have highlighted the importance for government of adopting a systematic approach to preparing for high-impact events, evaluating its performance frequently, and acting quickly on learning points while adhering to required standards of transparency and accountability even in emergencies. This goes beyond meeting legal (or audit) requirements. It involves adhering to the standards that government has set for itself to maintain and strengthen public trust. Also, if government can build resilience into systems and delivery chains, and develop consistently robust horizon scanning, risk management and operational management capabilities across government, this will help it to cope better with future emergency responses while also improving business-as-usual activities. This report provides our initial thoughts on the learning government can draw from its response to date, based on fieldwork which was mostly carried out in 2020. We aim to refine this thinking as we continue our work. Government will recognise and has already acted on some of these learning points, but given their importance, we reiterate them in this report. These issues, as well as more recent developments in the government’s pandemic response, will be further explored in our future work. And we will continue to draw out lessons from the government’s response to the pandemic to support its own evaluation of its performance

and provide Parliament and the public with timely reporting for accountability and learning.”

Whilst this commentary relates to Government, there are reflection points for the council.

- 7.2 Risk management:** *Identifying the wide-ranging consequences of major emergencies and developing playbooks for the most significant impacts. Being clear about risk appetite and risk tolerance as the basis for choosing which trade-offs should be made in emergencies.* The pandemic has been unprecedented in terms of scale, impact and duration. Risk management continues to be an important part of Cheshire East’s response to the pandemic. Identified risks have been subject to regular review. Whilst Cheshire East’s arrangements have stood up well, there is benefit in undertaking structured lessons learned exercises.
- 7.3 Transparency and public trust:** *Being clear and transparent about what government is trying to achieve, so that it can assess whether it is making a difference. Meeting transparency requirements and providing clear documentation to support decision-making, with transparency being used as a control when other measures, such as competition, are not in place. Producing clear and timely communications.* The Council has worked hard to communicate to the public, Members, staff and partners on a very regular basis. It has been challenging to always have clear messages when the position has changed so rapidly. Our learning has been to provide a constant stream of information and advice, even if there is nothing new to say. In terms of procurement, the Audit and Governance Committee continues to review all WARNS and WAIVERS, including those related to Covid, which have been flagged specifically.
- 7.4 Data and evidence:** *Improving the accuracy, completeness and interoperability of key datasets and sharing them promptly across delivery chains. Monitoring how programmes are operating, forecasting changes in demand as far as possible, and tackling issues arising from rapid implementation or changes in demand. Gathering information from end-users and front-line staff more systematically to test the effectiveness of programmes and undertake corrective action when required.* The Cheshire SRCG moved quickly to establish a data cell and prioritise the sharing of rapidly changing data and evidence. This has continued to evolve along with the pandemic response. There has been some frustration about access to and availability of some national and regional data, for example contact information on Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people, but these have been worked through collectively.

- 7.5 Coordination and delivery models:** *Ensuring that there is effective coordination and communication between government departments, central and local government, and private and public sector bodies. Integrating health and social care and placing social care on an equal footing with the NHS. Clarifying responsibilities for decision-making, implementation and governance, especially where delivery chains are complex and involve multiple actors. Balancing the relative merits of central, universal offers of support against targeted local support.* The Local Government Association has done an excellent job of keeping councils informed of the rapidly changing and multi-dimensional response. There have also been good examples of direct contact with Ministers to senior civil servants, assisted by remote meeting technology. The SRCG has provided a good route to escalate issues and decisions.
- 7.6 Supporting and protecting people:** *Understanding to what extent the pandemic and government's response have widened inequalities, and taking action where they have. Providing appropriate support to front-line and other key workers to cope with the physical, mental and emotional demands of responding to the pandemic.* The Council has relied on the extraordinary efforts of staff, Members and partners. We are fortunate to be able to harness the enthusiasm and capacity of the voluntary, community and faith and business sectors and we are extremely grateful for all their support. Further work will be undertaken to understand any ongoing impact on inequalities.
- 7.7 Financial and workforce pressures:** *Placing the NHS and local government on a sustainable footing, to improve their ability to respond to future emergencies. Ensuring that existing systems can respond effectively and flexibly to emergencies, including provision for spare or additional capacity and redeploying staff where needed. Considering which COVID-19-related spending commitments are likely to be retained for the long term, and what these additional spending commitments mean for long-term financial sustainability.* Cheshire East Council has carefully tracked the financial implications of Covid-19, reporting to Members on a regular basis. The position has changed dramatically over the last 18 months and the implications are still be monitored so that appropriate actions can be taken through the MTFs and budget monitoring. The pandemic has exposed areas of under-funding, capacity pressures and skills shortages, for example, public health professionals, enforcement officers and school support staff. Further information on the financial implications is given in section 8.2 below and will be included in the outturn reports to be reported to the next round of committees.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1 Legal Implications**

**8.1.1** The UK has made hundreds of laws in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Restrictions were imposed relating to movements, gatherings and high street business operations. The Government revoked England's lockdown laws on 19 July 2021. This means there are no longer any lockdown laws in force in England, although other types of coronavirus restrictions are still in force (notably self-isolation and international quarantine restrictions).

**8.1.2** The Health Protection (Coronavirus Regulations) (Steps) (England) Regulations ("the Roadmap Regulations") were initially published on 12 February 2021) as part of the Spring 2021 response to Covid-19. On 19 July, the Government moved to step 4 of the roadmap. Whilst many of the legal restrictions have been lifted, cautious guidance will remain, making clear that it is not yet a 'return to normal'. Such guidance includes the wearing of face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport, minimising the number, proximity and duration of social contact and encouraging businesses and large events to use the NHS Covid Pass in high risk settings so as to help limit the risk of infection. On 16 August the rules on self-isolating as a contact changed for people who are fully vaccinated and for under 18s. Those not fully vaccinated will still need to isolate if they are contacts, and everyone will still have to isolate if they test positive, to protect themselves and others.

**8.1.3** The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 have expired. The High Court determined that primary legislation would be necessary to allow remote meetings to continue. There was no reference to such legislation in the Queen's Speech on 12 May. Essential meetings including planning and licensing committees, are taking place in person with appropriate COVID-19 measures such as ensuring adequate ventilation, separation distances and the requirement for attendees to wear face masks unless sat during the meeting.

### **8.2 Financial Implications**

**8.2.1** The financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council relate to the need to incur additional expenditure to meet the needs of our community and to continue to provide services;

losses in income from sales, fees and charges; and reductions in council tax and business rates income. The effect on the Council's budget and its Medium Term Financial Strategy are influenced by the Government's approach to funding. Government policies and strategies in this regard have evolved over time, since March 2020; but essentially financial support to the Council and for our Borough has been provided in the following forms:

- Unringfenced grant
- Sales, fees and charges compensation scheme
- Tax income guarantee
- Specific grants
- Deferment of financial impacts on Capital Programme and Collection Fund

### **8.2.2 2020/21**

The final position for the year ended 31 March 2021 will be reported in the statutory accounts for the year, and is summarised in the tables below. Throughout the latter part of the 2020/21 financial year the Council has been reporting a potential c.£13m impact from COVID on the Council's MTFs.

The tables below show that Capitalisation (£8.1m) and Collection Fund losses (£3.8m) are effectively still being absorbed by the MTFs, totalling £11.9m, and this was a feature of the budget approved by Council in February 2020. The losses in the Collection Fund have reduced due to the improved collection rates in the final quarter of the year and the clarification of the Income Guarantee Scheme.

There is ongoing work to minimise the losses on the collection fund and the impact of spending in Capital. Residual grant is being carried forward to fund the ongoing costs of the pandemic in 2021/22.

## Service expenditure and income losses\*

			<b>£000</b>
<b>Service costs/ losses above Budget</b>			<b>31,788</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>			
<b>Unringfenced grant</b>			(23,926)
<b>Sales, fees &amp; charges compensation</b>			(4,930)
<b>Capitalisation of expenditure</b>			(8,085)
<b>Total - Financing</b>			<b>(36,941)</b>
<b>Allocation to COVID Earmarked Reserve</b>			<b>(5,153)</b>

\*Figures reflect provisional outturn position

## Council Tax and Business Rates\*

	<b>Losses in 2020/21 year</b>	<b>Met by Tax Income Guarantee Scheme</b>	<b>Deferred and managed over 3 years</b>
	£000	£000	£000
<b>Council Tax</b>	1,800	(1,074)	726
<b>Business Rates</b>	5,300	(2,223)	3,077
<b>Total - Collection Fund</b>	<b>7,100</b>	<b>(3,297)</b>	<b>3,803</b>

\*Figures reflect provisional outturn position

### 8.2.3 Specific Grants

The Council has received in excess of £250m in specific grants for the 2020/21 year. Analysis of spending of each grant will be provided as part of the outturn reporting for the financial year.

### 8.2.4 2021/22

The latest position for the current financial year will be formally reported in the Mid Year Review, but the Committee may wish to note the following with regard to latest estimates:

## Service expenditure and income losses\*

2021 / 22 Financial Year	Additional Expenditure	Income Losses	Net Cost
	£000	£000	£000
<b>Service costs/ losses vs Budget</b>	8,199	7,260	<b>15,459</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>			
<b>Unringfenced grant - brought forward</b>			(5,153)
<b>Unringfenced grant</b>			(8,500)
<b>Sales, fees &amp; charges compensation</b>			(750)
<b>Capitalisation of expenditure</b>			(650)
<b>Total – Financing</b>			<b>(15,003)</b>
<b>Potential Shortfall 2021/22</b>			<b>406</b>

\*Figures are illustrative, based on last estimates

**8.2.5** Implications for council tax and business rates will continue to be managed within the Collection Fund, over the medium term, and is not expected to have an immediate effect on the Council's revenue budget in 2021/22. Latest estimates for this year show losses in receipts of £1.0m on council tax, and £1.1m on business rates.

**8.2.6** The Council has also been allocated a further £37.3m for 2021/22 in specific grants. These grants continue to support outbreak management, infection control in care homes, and to provide businesses with support and restart grants, along with other grants to support residents. Further specific grants may become payable and require local administration in response to the emerging status of the pandemic response.

### **8.2.7 Reporting to Government**

Reporting of the Council's position continues to be required by MHCLG on a monthly basis and those returns are published on the Cheshire East website:

[Open data and transparency \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk)

[Search for 'covid' | Insight Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

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.



### **8.3 Policy Implications**

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

### **8.4 Equality Implications**

**8.4.1** Work has continued to improve accessibility of the vaccine, particularly for those who are vaccine hesitant or less able to travel to vaccination centres. The rates within Electoral Wards range from 61.0% - 91.0%. Some of this variation is due to some wards having a significantly younger age profile and therefore only became eligible for vaccination later in the schedule. Targetted efforts are in place to assist harder to reach sections of our communities to access vaccination.

**8.4.2** We carried out individual risk assessments for staff with protected characteristics, particularly in relation to BAME colleagues and staff with a disability and have issued regular reminders to keep these under review as circumstances may change.

### **8.5 Human Resources Implications**

**8.5.1** The latest data on staff absences on 18 August 2021 are 17 (9 in June) staff self-isolating and working from home, 1 (1 in July) member of staff self-isolating and not working from home (role doesn't allow), 15 (2 in June) Covid-related absences, and 108 (94 in June) non-Covid-related absences. The increases in rates reflect the rise in infection rates across the region.

**8.5.2** Staff vaccinations: as at 4 August 2021 1871 staff are eligible for vaccinations due to their role. Of these, 91.4% have had a first vaccination.

**8.5.3** The pandemic has exposed capacity pressures and skills shortages, for example, public health professionals, enforcement officers, care workers and school support staff. In addition, the challenging financial context and re-prioritisation of work has meant that vacant posts in some service areas have not been automatically filled.

**8.5.4** There continues to be regular communication with staff and good co-operation with the Trade Unions. The results of the latest Pulse Survey were brought to the July meeting.

## **8.6 Risk Management Implications**

**8.6.1** The risk environment around COVID-19 remains dynamic. 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.

## **8.7 Rural Communities Implications**

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

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

**8.8.1** 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.

## **8.9 Public Health Implications**

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

## **8.10 Climate Change Implications**

**8.10.1** There have been positive benefits of fewer cars on the road during the first 12 months of the pandemic, although traffic levels are now exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Those staff who have been able to work from home have done so and business mileage has also reduced. There has also been lower demand for heating/lighting offices. The emerging Future Workplace Strategy will carefully consider how to embed carbon reduction.

## **9 Ward Members Affected**

**9.1** All members.

### **Access to Information**

HM Government website contains comprehensive information.

Roadmap

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/963491/COVID-19\\_Response\\_-\\_Spring\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963491/COVID-19_Response_-_Spring_2021.pdf)

Contact Officer:	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services Jane.burns@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686013
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Government Guidance COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021(Roadmap) National Audit Office – Initial Learning from the Government’s Response to Covid-19