

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	2 December 2021
Report Title:	Covid-19 Update
Report of:	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Report Reference No.	CP/55/21-22
Ward(s) Affected	All

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** At the time of writing, whilst the legal restrictions that the Government imposed through the pandemic were lifted in July, the pandemic is not over. The responsibility has passed to organisations and individuals to take steps to reduce the risk of Covid. Council and its partners have continued to encourage caution and restraint whilst managing the implications. The implications for council activities are summarised in section 5.
- 1.3** 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 ongoing implications of Covid-19 and Cheshire East Council's response.

3. 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 September 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 the Delta and Delta Plus variant predominantly. In Cheshire East the infection rate doubled between September and mid-October. Following this, the rate started to fall again.

Whilst Cheshire East rates had been the lowest rate in the Cheshire and Merseyside sub region consistently, in the last 2 months the infection rate in Cheshire East has been consistently higher than the North West and England rates. In areas with particularly high case rates, surge testing and targeted vaccination programmes have been introduced. However, since 16 October, Cheshire East has seen a reduction in infection rates from 705 cases per 100,000 population (as of 16 October 2021) down to 436 cases per 100,000 (1,684 cases in the last couple of weeks as of 29 October 2021) over a 7 day period. Nevertheless, it remains a priority to emphasise the need for the local population to follow COVID safety guidance and get fully vaccinated (including boosters where appropriate).

There are fewer COVID-related admissions in our local hospitals than in previous waves, however non-COVID occupancy is higher and overall pressures on Emergency Departments remain very high.

As of 3 November 2021, there were 294,818 eligible registered patients over the age of 12 with Cheshire GP Practices who have received their first dose (83.8%) and 278,821 (79.0%) who have received their second dose.

The rate of full vaccination within electoral wards ranges from 54.9% to 86.3% and boosters from 8.8% to 30.7%. One explanation for this variation is that some wards have a significantly younger age profile and therefore only became eligible for vaccination later in the schedule. Targeted efforts are in place to ensure everyone in our communities is able to be vaccinated, with additional support to those with greater need, where possible.

5.4 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. This involves being both proactive in local outbreak management, whilst also being reactive and responding to the many changes brought by DHSC, often with little or no notice. The focus of testing throughout autumn and winter will be more targeted on under-served and disproportionately impacted groups, as informed by extensive data and behavioural insights work undertaken by the team. During autumn and winter, the contact tracing team will hope to achieve a fully localised contact tracing (Local-4) system once again, as this was deactivated when Cheshire East became an ERA. The Microsoft Dynamics 365 case management system will be further developed during autumn and winter to provide a smarter way of working, with the aim that this can continue long-term to support a 'business as usual' model, once developed, in 2022.

5.5 Developments since September 2021

5.5.1 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.

5.5.2 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:

5.5.3 Education – The DfE have released their [absence statistics](#) covering Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021 terms. Cheshire East primary, secondary and special sectors have a lower unauthorised absence rate and a lower persistent absence rate compared to national and the North West region. Cheshire East primary and secondary sectors also have a lower rate of sessions lost due to Covid-19 circumstances compared to national and the North West region.

Across Cheshire East, the rate of Covid-19 cases amongst children and young people is significantly higher than the rate in our general population, although very few become very ill or need hospitalisation. Due to the high number of Covid-19 cases in schools, Cheshire East has advised that as a temporary measure, where one individual in a household tests positive, children and young people from that household who attend school or college should:

- Limit their social contacts.
- Arrange for a PCR test and they should not attend school or college for a minimum of 5 days.
- If the test result is positive the person should self-isolate as required by law.

We have also introduced temporary enhanced measures in schools which will be applied on an individual school basis depending on infection rates. These enhanced measures include wearing face masks in communal areas and classrooms, and reducing mixing in assemblies and other indoor activities across classes/ year groups. We have also encouraged additional testing in schools where there are outbreaks.

£500 has been allocated to each secondary school, special school and college to set up increased testing for pupils age 11 and above in line with the recent DfE advice. Schools were asked to encourage pupils to continue testing over the October half term break and to complete a test before returning.

The vaccination programme for 12-15 year olds, led by the School Nursing Service, continues to support schools. So far over 2,500 vaccines have been given. The team will be in schools each day until mid November to complete this programme. Vaccination should help to reduce the need for pupils to have time off school and reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 within schools.

School staff who were identified as being eligible for a priority vaccine in January/ February this year are now entitled to a booster vaccine. Booster vaccines are currently limited to those who meet the criteria for very close working with vulnerable and at risk pupils. Schools are currently identifying those who meet the criteria so they can be invite for their vaccine.

Significant work continues to be planned and delivered for curriculum recovery and supporting all learners. Following successful staff training events for curriculum planning in core subjects, this work is now widening to include science, humanities and practical subjects to ensure our school subject leaders are fully confident to plan workschemes that address gaps in knowledge but maintain the focus on progression of learning through the year groups.

Ofsted inspections have now been reinstated which can result in a change of judgement and successful briefings have taken place to share the learning from those schools who have been inspected so far this term. Concerns are strongly felt by school leaders as to the position being taken by Inspectors regarding the significant impact of COVID on the ability of schools to strategically plan and embed curriculum reforms. The pressures on managing the day to day COVID responses in terms of staff shortages etc and for some schools, to keep the school open to all year groups, results in very limited time for staff and school leaders to strategically plan.

Work has commenced on preparing schools for national assessment arrangements for summer 2022; we await further national guidance on this especially relating to primary assessment arrangements.

5.5.4 Children's Social Care –There continue to be significant pressures nationally on the number of placements available for cared for children and young people as a result of the pandemic. As a result we are continuing to experience 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.

From 27 October – 4 November Ofsted undertook a focused visit of Child in Need and Child Protection Services. The findings are embargoed until the final report is published which is expected to be on 8 December. However, inspectors asked us to extend their thanks to all staff who were involved in the inspection, as their

openness and engagement allowed them to gain a good understanding of practice in Cheshire East.

Early Help and Prevention – Household Support Fund - Cheshire East Council with the help of a wide range of local partners, is distributing vouchers worth £2.2 million on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions, to support the most vulnerable households across the borough with food, utilities, housing costs, and other essentials over the winter period. The money is our share of the government's £500 million Household Support Fund which will run from 6 October 2021 until 31 March 2022. The fund is available to support both adults (without dependent children) and families with children and will be made available to vulnerable households who need additional financial support.

Support for children via the grant will be delivered in line with the previous COVID Support Grant. This includes children eligible for free school meals, care leavers between 18-25, young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training, young carers, children open to social care and early help and prevention services, and children who are known to domestic abuse services. Vulnerable children who do not receive support via these channels are eligible for referral from professionals.

Adults will be referred for support from the Benefits Service, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Age UK, the Winter Wellbeing Group, Housing Associations and other multi-agency professionals. This will include individuals at immediate risk of eviction or who are facing notable winter poverty with regards to food or utilities.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme - The government's Holiday Activities and Food Programme has been extended to cover the winter holidays. The scheme provides enjoyable activities and nutritious meals for primary and secondary school aged children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals during the school holidays. It is also an important source of support for children and families during the holiday period. Providers have been invited to express their interest in being part of the programme.

5.5.5 Adult social care – There continue to be 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 has resulted in an increase in care packages being handed back to the Council by providers, particularly in areas where recruitment is historically challenging and

a number of providers indicating that they are unable to cover care calls at short notice due to staff sickness.

An on call rota has been set up to manage any challenges that arise at weekends, and commissioners are in the process of identifying a bank of staff who are trained to deliver care in emergency situations.

Funding has been identified from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to support the care market with recruitment to alleviate the pressures on hospitals and encourage care staff be vaccinated against Covid-19 and flu.

Staffing shortages are not confined to the Care at Home market and care home providers are reporting difficulties recruiting and retaining staff and increased costs for agency staff. Staffing shortages have been cited as the main reason for the recent announcement of the closure of a care home in Sandbach.

5.5.6 Covid-19 vaccinations become mandatory for care home staff on 11 November 2021. Currently 96% of staff working in Cheshire East care homes have received the first dose of the vaccination and 92% have had the second vaccination. Of those staff that have not yet been vaccinated, 43 are medically exempt and a further 64 have refused the vaccination despite support offered by the Public Health team and NHS to encourage staff to have the vaccine. The Government consultation on extending the mandatory vaccination to other front line health and social care staff closed on 22 October and the outcome is awaited.

5.5.7 Registration services and bereavement services (Orbitas) –

Legal restrictions on the numbers of people allowed to attend funerals, wakes and weddings were lifted earlier in the year. Venues for such events are asked to ensure that a Covid safe environment is in place.

The Registration Service is extremely busy delivering ceremonies that were originally cancelled during periods of lockdown or when the numbers permitted to attend ceremonies were limited.

Significantly more mid-week ceremonies are being delivered than is normal during the autumn and winter, this is due to venues having little or no weekend availability. An increased demand for mid-week ceremonies has created staffing pressures for the Service as this is when births and deaths are registered. At the start of the pandemic in March 2020 central Government, using emergency legislation, changed the national Regulations permitting deaths to be

registered over the telephone. This has proved to be very successful and has been appreciated by those needing to register deaths. The Registrar General has indicated that this facility is likely to end in March 2022 when the relevant emergency legislation expires.

5.5.8 Tatton Park – All facilities are now open. Visit the website for information: www.tattonpark.org.uk/home.aspx

5.5.9 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.

5.5.10 Waste and recycling collections – There continues to be pressure on the waste collections system. There has been an increase in the tonnage of waste collected since the first lockdown when more people started to work from home, and this has not yet reduced to pre-lockdown levels, although recycling levels remain encouragingly high. Throughout the pandemic, ANSA Environmental Services, the Council's wholly owned company, have continued to empty all three waste streams whilst many local authorities have ceased one or more of their collections. However, there continues to be disruption to individual rounds on

a daily basis due to staff absences due to sickness of self-isolation and the shortage of agency staff to provide cover, particularly qualified HGV drivers, has added to this pressure. ANSA have introduced a number of measures to help manage these challenges, including suitably qualified managers and supervisors joining collection crews when necessary. When rounds are missed ANSA will try to return to missed collections within 5 working days.

5.5.11 Planning – There are also pressures within the Planning service at present with a significant increase in caseload due to a combination of increased volumes of applications, particularly smaller householder applications, and reduced officer capacity. This has resulted in lengthy delays in determining applications and a significant increase in the number of live applications to 2,876 at the end of September, more than double the normal level. A number of measures to help manage officer caseload and manage customer expectations have been introduced and an external provider has been procured to provide additional resources to help address the backlog of applications over the next 9-12 months. We continue to recruit to fill staff vacancies on a permanent basis. To help develop greater resilience and improve service standards in the longer term, a deep dive review of the service is being undertaken. A Members Advisory Panel has been established to support and advise the review.

5.6 Business Grants Update

5.6.1 The Council was allocated in August, a further £3.4million of the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant funding – created to help organisations recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Deadline for expenditure is 31st March 2022. The Council launched 3 Grant schemes in September.

5.6.2 Extended Restrictions Grant (applications now closed)

To support businesses affected by the extension of restrictions from 21 June 2021 to and including 18 July 2021.

Total grants of £426,500 have been paid to 185 businesses

5.6.3 Business Interruption Fund – Open until 17 December 2021

This is a discretionary grant scheme to support those businesses who have had their business operations affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). The grant will be made available to

those businesses who are able to demonstrate that after 19 July 2021 the business continued to be affected by the pandemic.

The circumstances in which a grant will be awarded are exceptional and COVID related. One of the following must apply:

- Business is operating at a reduced capacity due to staff shortages as a result of isolation requirements.
- Business has had to close for operational issues due to COVID-19 outbreak or isolation requirements
- The business cashflow has been disrupted as a result of a COVID-19 In addition the business must be able to evidence the cost of the interruption to business operations.

5.6.4 Recovery and Growth Grant – Open until 17 December 2021

This Recovery and Growth Grant Programme is to support economic recovery and assist businesses that are seeking to grow, adapt, diversify, and expand their current operation to support long-term sustainability. The grant will be made available for businesses seeking to invest in their premises, facilities or equipment that will enable them to re-open quickly, bring staff and customers safely back to work or to capitalise on new opportunities. The grant is paid retrospectively.

Only the following expenditure will be eligible for a grant:

- furniture, fittings and equipment to create outside business spaces or to adapt internal workspaces
- improved building ventilation/ air exchange or low carbon heating and green energy solutions
- specialist electric vehicles and associated charging points for business uses
- digital hardware and software to enable the adoption of new digital business practices including setting up a new e-commerce or e-POS systems, payment systems or to enable flexible/ remote working etc
- purchase of equipment or machinery to capitalise on new and emerging business opportunities
- access improvements / amendments (i.e. motion sensor doors, queueing adaptations, one-way set-ups, improvised waiting areas etc)

- internal adaptations (i.e. relocation of existing fixtures / fittings / services etc. potentially to support revised utilisation of space to ensure social distancing or diversified uses of premises).

5.7 Future Workplace and engagement

5.7.1 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.

5.7.2 Member decision-making meetings have been held face-to-face since the remote meeting regulations expired. Appropriate health and safety and risk assessments have been undertaken to protect participants. The Government is conducting a consultation on future arrangements. More information will be provided in due course.

5.7.3 Covid-19 and new ways of working have been a catalyst for a refresh of the Workplace Strategy which was approved at the Corporate Policy Committee In November 2021. 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 revised agile working policy has been launched alongside a future workplace guide and conversation toolkit. All staff are being actively encouraged to discuss future ways of working and how this best meets future requirements. These discussions will also inform future workplace design.

5.8 Recovery planning

5.8.1 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.

5.8.2 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.

5.8.3 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.

5.8.4 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.

5.8.5 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
- Winter planning and table top exercise on adult social care.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 Consultations have resumed, although they are predominantly through digital or remote means.

7. Implications

7.1 Legal Implications

7.1.1 The UK Government 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). As of the 7 November 2021, the remaining 7 countries were removed from the 'Red list' of international travel.

7.1.2 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.

7.1.3 Mandatory vaccinations for staff working in care home settings applies from the 11 November 2021 to all staff undertaking personal or nursing care in a regulated care home setting in England.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/891/contents/made>.

The regulations do not apply to the NHS and are subject to a review in one year.

7.1.4 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.

7.2 Financial Implications

7.2.1 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

7.2.2 2021/22

The latest position for the current financial year will be formally reported as part of the in-year Finance Review, to Finance Sub Committee on 1 December 2021. The Committee may wish to note the following with regard to latest estimates, which show that current year Covid-related pressures on Service budgets may be covered by Covid-related unringfenced grants, the compensation receivable for income losses, and capitalisation of some expenditure:

Service expenditure and income losses

	Expenditure	Income	Net
	£000	£000	£000
Service costs/ losses above Budget	5,636	4,377	10,013
Financed by:			
Use of unringfenced grant held in reserve from 2020/21			(513)
Unringfenced grant – 2021/22			(8,500)
Sales, fees & charges compensation – 2021/22			(800)
Capitalisation of expenditure			(200)
Total – Financing			(10,013)
Potential Surplus/ Deficit in 2021/22			-

7.2.3 Included in the above forecast is a provision of £400,000, being the latest estimate of the potential support required by Everybody Sport & Recreation to help cover the shortfall in their budgets as a consequence of income losses in the year. As per the precedent set in 2020/21, the Council will continue to provide further support in this regard; and any relating payment this year will be made in

accordance with the Constitution and covered by use of the unringfenced Covid grant, as shown above.

7.2.4 Implications for council tax and business rates will continue to be managed within the Collection Fund, over the medium term, and are 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 £2.5m on council tax, and £8.6m on business rates.

7.2.5 The Council has also been allocated some £70m for 2021/22 in specific grants, to date, to 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.

7.2.6 Reporting to Government

Reporting of the Council's position continues to be submitted frequently to DLUHC as required, in the specified format; 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.

7.3 Policy Implications

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

7.4 Equality Implications

7.4.1 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 rate of full vaccination within electoral wards ranges from 54% to 86.3% and boosters from 8.8% to 30.7%. One explanation for this variation is that some wards have a significantly younger age profile and therefore only become eligible for vaccination later in the schedule. Targeted efforts are in place to ensure everyone in our communities are

able to be vaccinated, with additional support to those with greater need, where possible.

- 7.4.2** 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. Further work is being done to support staff who may be vaccine hesitant, including BAME staff.

7.5 Human Resources Implications

- 7.5.1** The latest data on staff absences on 1 November 2021 are 7 (21 in October) staff self-isolating and working from home, 4 (1 in October) member of staff self-isolating and not working from home (role does not allow), 39 (18 in October) Covid-related sickness absences, and 128 (150 in October) non-Covid-related sickness absences.

- 7.5.2** Staff vaccinations: as at 1 November 2021 1900 staff are eligible for vaccinations due to their role. Of these, 94% have had a first vaccination and 91% have had their second vaccination.

- 7.5.3** 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. Work continues to provide short and longer term resourcing solutions.

- 7.5.4** There continues to be regular communication with staff and good co-operation with the Trade Unions.

7.6 Risk Management Implications

- 7.6.1** 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.

7.7 Rural Communities Implications

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

7.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

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

7.9 Public Health Implications

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

7.10 Climate Change Implications

7.10.1 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.

8 Ward Members Affected

8.1 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	
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)