

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SITUATION

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Lynn, Chief Executive

DATE: 18 August 2020

EXTN: 37600

PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This report updates the Overview Select Committee on the Council's response to the pandemic situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i) OSC is requested to note the actions taken to date

1. BACKGROUND:

This report provides an update on progress since the last OSC report on 9 June 2020 in relation to the Covid-19 response by the Council.

A report is going to Cabinet on 21 September 2020 which will cover these main points but it will also highlight the main themes discussed at the Covid-19 Recovery Working Party meeting which took place on 23 July 2020 and the next Working Party which is taking place on 8 September 2020. The minutes and any recommendations from these meetings will also go to Cabinet on 21 September 2020 for discussion and approval. The 21 September 2020 Cabinet report will be presented to the Overview Select Committee meeting on 6 October 2020 to give the Committee the opportunity to scrutinise the actions taken and proposals for the future recovery of the Council and its services.

Members should note that it has not always been possible to follow the preferred route for Covid-19 reports in particular, ie for all reports to go to OSC before Cabinet due to the additional Cabinet meetings (reserve meetings not normally used) which have been required since the start of the pandemic.

Members should also note that this report is primarily a summary of what has previously been sent to members in the weekly Councillor Briefing from Cllr Walsh and Nigel Lynn.

Welfare of Staff and Members

- 1.1.1. Restricted access to the civic buildings continues, with the majority of staff still working from home where they are able to, in line with Government guidance. Staff are permitted to return to the office from 27 July 2020 for 1 designated day a week sitting at an allocated desk, if they have agreed this with their line manager. The offices have been made Covid-secure and calculations for the volume of staff permitted in the building, based on the 1 metre plus Government ruling, have been adhered to. One-way routes through the building have been made and toilets are all unisex and only permit 1 user at a time. Plans for allowing staff to return to the office for more than 1 day a week is being considered by CMT in the future, with consideration being given to the safety and wellbeing of staff, Members and contractors.

The Council's Finances

- 1.1.2. The final picture regarding the Council's financial position will not be known until the emergency is over. The latest prediction, in our return to MHCLG is that the potential cost to the Council will be approximately £5m.
- 1.1.3. On 16 July 2020, Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick confirmed allocations for individual councils from the £500 million of additional support for coronavirus-related spending pressures. The funding will help councils in England continue to deliver crucial frontline services, support those most in need and meet new spending pressures so they can deliver for residents.
- 1.1.4. Arun's confirmed allocation for the third tranche of funding is £264,767 as highlighted in the table below.

First Tranche of Covid-19 Funding	Second Tranche of Covid-19 Funding	Third Tranche of Covid-19 Funding	Total Covid-19 Additional Funding
£64,612	£1,609,640	£264,767	£1,939,019

- 1.1.5. On 23 July 2020, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, has written to chief executives of billing authorities notifying them of his decision that the Small Business Grants Fund, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund and the Discretionary Grants Fund should close by Friday 28 August. The letter notes that local authorities have now made £10.76 billion grant payments to over 875,000 hereditaments, which equates to more than 92 per cent of those identified as in scope for the first two schemes. It also states that, once the final payments have been made on all schemes, it will be necessary for local authorities to return any unspent funds to BEIS.

Communications

- 1.1.6. Contact via social media continues to be a popular means of gathering information. Weekly reminders of our news bulletins and social media posts are issued including regular reminders about social distancing, avoiding busy places and considerate use of our beaches and town centres.

Homelessness

- 1.1.7. At the peak of the lock down period we offered 61 households emergency accommodation in line with government guidance. During that period, 21 clients moved to more permanent accommodation. Of the remaining 40, we have provided more settled housing for 50 per cent of them and 50 per cent have chosen not to engage with the services offered. For those that have returned to their previous circumstances, we are working with partners and our out-reach teams to offer support where needed.
- 1.1.8. On 18 July 2020, the Housing Secretary launched the Next Steps Accommodation Programme on 18 July 2020. Councils and their local partners can apply for funds from the government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme to cover property costs and support new tenancies for around 15,000 vulnerable people who were provided with emergency accommodation during the pandemic.
- 1.1.9. A total of £105 million is now available to ensure interim accommodation and support continues for those who need it and can be used to help people move into the private rented sector, extend or secure alternative interim accommodation or where possible help people to reconnect with friends or family.
- 1.1.10. In addition, first wave funding, totalling £161 million, is also available to provide 3,300 additional supported homes this year for those currently housed in emergency accommodation. This is part of a total of £433 million to provide 6,000 long term, safe homes for those in need.
- 1.1.11. Council officers will be looking into this further and taking the necessary actions.

Local outbreaks – local authority powers

- 1.1.12. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020 came into force on Saturday 18 July. The new regulations give local and national government additional powers to stop local transmission of the virus.
- 1.1.13. These will allow them to restrict local public gatherings and events, and close local businesses premises and outdoor spaces.
- 1.1.14. The Department of Health and Social Care has published statutory guidance for Councils in England on what the new regulations allow them to do and how they should exercise those powers, how those powers should be enforced and guidance for those affected by local authority directions.
- 1.1.15. Council officers will be looking into this further and taking the necessary actions.

Parks & Open Spaces

1.1.16. From 4 July 2020 all playgrounds in the district reopened and these all have new signage which will include messages around social distancing.

Support to Local Businesses

1.1.17. The Business and Planning Bill proposes to make it easier for businesses serving food and drink such as restaurants, cafes and pubs to seat and serve customers outdoors, to assist them in managing social distancing to control the spread of Covid-19. The temporary pavement licences process introduces a streamlined consent route to allow businesses to obtain a licence to place temporary furniture, such as tables and chairs outside of cafes, bars and restaurants quickly.

1.1.18. As above, the Council has paid significant sums to local businesses by way of the three grant funds (Small Business Grants Fund, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund and the Discretionary Grants Fund).

1.1.19. The reopening of the High Streets has gone smoothly and safely and no significant concerns have been reported. Customers are following guidelines and social distancing measures and shop owners have appreciated the support from wardens and the Council. The Community Information Officers (Wardens) have been extremely proactive in resolving some hot spots and pinch points in both busy locations.

1.1.20. Pier Road in Littlehampton has been closed temporarily to allow for social distancing in the area.

1.1.21. Cleansing continues at an advanced level including the regular cleaning of public seating/benches in Littlehampton due to high usage.

Leisure

1.1.22. Freedom Leisure opened its Leisure Centres in the District on 25 July 2020, in response to new Government guidance. Strict guidelines are being followed to ensure that the facilities are Covid-secure with booking systems, limited numbers and cleaning regimes.

Council Decision-Making

1.1.23. Since the last report to Cabinet on 20 July 2020, virtual Committee meetings have been held including:

- Full Council on 22 July 2020
- Covid Recovery Working Party on 23 July 2020
- Constitution Working Party on 17 August 2020

2. PROPOSAL(S):

OSC is requested to note the Council's response to the pandemic situation.

3. OPTIONS:

- i) To note the Council's response to the pandemic situation
- ii) To request further information from officers

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify)		X

**5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES:
(Explain in more detail at 6 below)**

	YES	NO
Financial	✓	
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		

6. IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The final picture regarding the Council's financial position will not be known until the emergency is over. We predict that the potential cost to the Council could now be will be approximately £5m although the Council has received only £264,767 in the third tranche of funding, bringing the total Covid-19 funding received to just £1,939,019. Clearly the shortfall in funding against total costs to the Council will affect the Council's finances significantly going forward and this will be considered with the Covid Recovery Working Party and Cabinet when recommendations are considered for future work to address the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the authority.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

For OSC to note the Council's response to the pandemic situation.

8 EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 1 September 2020

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Arun Webpage - Covid-19](#)

[Cabinet report 1.6.20](#)

[OSC report 9.6.20](#)

[Cabinet report and minutes 22.6.20](#)

[Cabinet report and minutes 20.7.20](#)