

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET ON 19 OCTOBER 2020

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

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Lynn, Chief Executive
DATE: 22 September 2020
EXTN: 37600
PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This report updates Cabinet on the Council's response to the pandemic situation and possible proposals for economic recovery.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is requested to resolve to:

- (1) note the actions taken to date;
- (2) note that following the discussion at Cabinet on 21 September 2020 in relation to the recommendations from the Covid-19 Recovery Working Party held on 8 September 2020, the Chief Executive will present a report to Cabinet on 16 November which will prioritise the recommendations and identify any costs.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1.1. This report provides an update on progress since the last Cabinet report of 21 September 2020 in relation to the Covid-19 response by the Council. Members are asked to note that due to the report being written in advance of the Cabinet meeting, the actual date range that this update is for, is from 10 August 2020 (the date of writing the report to Cabinet on 21 September 2020) to 22 September 2020 (the date of writing this report).
- 1.1.2. On 21 September 2020, Cabinet were presented with the recommendations from the Covid-19 Recovery Working Party meeting which took place on 8 September 2020. The Chief Executive will present a report to Cabinet on 16 November which will prioritise the recommendations and identify any costs.

Covid-19 update on the Council's response since the last Cabinet report on 21 September 2020

Communications

- 1.1.3. 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. The public are being kept well informed of all key messages.
- 1.1.4. Councillors, Partners of Arun and the Town and Parish Councils have been updated with new information from partners, other authorities and Government bodies via emailed briefing notes from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. These moved to fortnightly briefings from mid-September however email updates will be issued each week, if important information needs to be circulated.

Welfare of Staff, Members and the Public

- 1.1.5. 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. On 22 September 2020, the Prime Minister announced that people should work from home where they are able to do so. CMT will therefore ensure that only staff who *need* to work in the office do so and everyone else works from home.
- 1.1.6. The Council has not opened its reception areas (apart from providing a service to homeless presentations), meeting rooms or communal areas in line with Government guidance and officers are working hard to ensure that the public can access all services either online or via our contact centre.
- 1.1.7. The Community Hub remains in operation providing support seven days a week from 8am to 8pm and WSCC are managing this with an interim team of library staff supporting all Covid-19 related inbound calls from customers, supported by Duty Managers.

Covid-19 Prevalence

- 1.1.8. Councillors, Partners of Arun and the Town and Parish Councils have been updated on the prevalence of Covid-19 in West Sussex by way of the regular briefing notes.
- 1.1.9. Environmental Health teams are currently delivering advice to businesses on the steps they need to take to ensure workplaces are Covid-19 secure. This is mainly on a reactive basis on receipt of complaint from concerned members of staff/customers, or request for advice from the business. In accordance with our enforcement policies, these interventions are advisory, though formal enforcement action can be and is occasionally necessary to obtain compliance. With the introduction of the new Rule of Six by Government, the Council will work with the Police and to respond to breaches of COVID-19 Secure guidelines.

- 1.1.10. Allocated officers are receiving regular updates from Government bodies, Public Health England and the Sussex Resilience Forum and local prevalence is being monitored. The Corporate Management Team, relevant Group Heads and our Communications Team are being informed of the numbers of Covid-19 cases in both Arun and the whole of West Sussex and will be advised should any local action be necessary.
- 1.1.11. From the 18 September 2020 it is legal requirement for certain businesses to have in place a system to collect NHS test and trace data. Businesses must request people entering premises to provide certain information unless they have done so via the displayed QR code. There are only limited exemptions to this. Businesses must also take reasonable steps to prevent entry of any person who has not provided the necessary information. From 24 September certain businesses must by law also display a QR code. The Council has been publicising this information to our Councillors, public, local businesses, partners and Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.1.12. People will be required by law to self-isolate from 28 September, supported by payment of £500 for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result. New fines for those breaching self-isolation rules will start at £1,000. Arun District Council, along with other local authorities, will be working quickly to set up these self-isolation support schemes and we expect them to be in place by 12 October.

The Council's Finances

- 1.1.13. The financial effects of Covid-19 have been severe for the Council, in common with other local authorities across the country. Whilst we have had to rely on a number of assumptions in many areas, especially losses from Council Tax and business, the latest return to the government estimates our income losses as £879k (after mitigation) and additional expenditure as approx. £1.8M. We have been given grants from government (currently £1,939,019) and there is an income compensation scheme whereby the Council bear 5% of losses and the government support 75% of the remainder. It is clear, however, that this funding will be inadequate, and in any case will just be a temporary one off allocation. A report from the Group Head of Corporate Support on the Financial Prospects 2020/21 to 2025/26 was considered by Cabinet on 21 September 2020 and this gave more detail regarding the Council's financial position.
- 1.1.14. Freedom Leisure is in receipt of a support package to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's Leisure Operating Contract. A report from the Group Head of Community Wellbeing was considered by Cabinet on 21 September 2020. That report set out the current situation and recommendations for the future viability of the contract including recommendations to recover the forecast income for operating fees as budgeted using the local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges as a result of Covid-19 and to recommend to Full Council that a supplementary estimate for a sum up to £191,500 (Band D equivalent of £3.07) to support the Council's leisure operating contract from October to December 2020 be approved.

1.1.15. The Small Business Grants Fund, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund and the Discretionary Grants Fund closed on Friday 28 August and all payments were issued to eligible businesses by 30 September 2020. Once the final payments have been made on all schemes, local authorities must return any unspent funds to BEIS. See below for the figures, as of 17.9.20 showing the amount received and paid for all three Funds:

Description	Received £	Paid £
Business Support Grants Fund (SBGF) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant Fund (RHLBG)	37,841,000	29,925,000
Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (Top-up to Local Business grant scheme)	1,539,000	1,528,000
Total	39,380,000	31,453,500

Secretary of State Visit to West Sussex – 18 August

1.1.16. Cabinet Minister Oliver Dowden (Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport) visited visitor attractions in the county and took part in discussions with business leaders at Butlins, Bognor Regis, focusing on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector. The Leader, Cllr Dr James Walsh, and the Chief Executive, Nigel Lynn, attended the visit and were able to hear the issues raised with the Minister, particularly about the measures being taken to keep visitors safe and how the Government can help the industry in the coming months. It gave this Council the opportunity to highlight issues and ask directly for support in helping to develop tourism for our coastal areas in the future.

Council Decision-Making

1.1.17. Since the last report to Cabinet on 21 September 2020, virtual Committee meetings have been held including:

- Full Council – 16.9.20
- Cabinet – 21.9.20
- Planning Policy Sub Committee – 22 September 2020
- Standards Committee – 24 September 2020
- Development Control Committee – 30 September 2020
- Overview Select Committee – 6 October 2020
- Littlehampton Regeneration Sub Committee – 7 October 2020
- ADC/University of Chichester JMT – 9 October 2020
- Constitution Working Party – 12 October 2020
- Council Tax support T&F Working Party – 13 October 2020
- ADC/Chichester DC JMT – 14 October 2020

2. PROPOSAL(S):

Cabinet is requested to note the actions taken to date and to note that following the discussion at Cabinet on 21 September 2020 in relation to the recommendations from the Coronavirus Recovery Working Party held on 8 September 2020, the Chief Executive will present a report to Cabinet on 16 November which will prioritise the recommendations and identify any costs.

3. OPTIONS:

To note this update report or
To request further information

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify) - Cabinet	✓	
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 It must be recognised that the Council also has limited funds to be able to make direct interventions. Instead, it is likely that the Council will need to focus on providing local leadership and policy changes to provide an economic stimulus and facilitate any necessary structural change. This may require seeking out external funding wherever possible. In the main, therefore, this Council will be facilitating the recovery process and helping to provide community leadership.
- 6.2 The Council's financial position has been highlighted to Cabinet by way of a separate report on 21 September 2020 from the Group Head of Corporate Support but it should be noted that the shortfall in funding against total costs to the Council will affect the Council's finances significantly going forward and therefore any proposed actions as a

result of the Covid Recovery Working Party recommendations will need to be considered carefully.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

For Cabinet to note the Council's response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

8 EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 19 October 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](#)

[Covid-19 Recovery Working Party Minutes - 080920](#)

