

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET ON 16 NOVEMBER 2020

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

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Lynn, Chief Executive

DATE: 3 November 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.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress since the last Cabinet report of 19 October 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 22 September 2020 (the date of writing the report to Cabinet on 19 October 2020) to 3 November 2020 (the date of finalising this report).
- 1.2 From Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, the Government is requiring people to stay at home, except for specific purposes. In terms of the direct impact on the Council:
 - Staff will continue to work from home, unless they are unable to do so and they will be permitted to work from the Council offices. Further information is given on this under item 1.7.
 - We are on track to close our leisure centres and leisure facilities such as adventure golf as required by government.
 - Play areas will remain open.
 - There is no official shielding however we are providing support to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people in conjunction with WSCC via the community hub.

- We will be working with partners such as Stonepillow and Turning tides over rough sleepers.
- Business premises forced to close in England are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month under the Local Restrictions Support Grant and £1.1bn is being given to Local Authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly. The Council awaits further details of our funding allocation and officers will work to implement the scheme.

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

Communications

- 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.
- 1.4 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 quickly changed back to weekly publications due to the rise in Covid-19 cases.
- 1.5 The Council is a member of the Greater Brighton Economic Board (GBEB). At a GBEB meeting on 19 October 2020, an update was given on the impact of Covid-19 on the area. Details given were as follows and a separate report will be presented to Cabinet on 14 December 2020 giving more information:
- The Greater Brighton region has been impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic, notably in the creative, arts, visitor economy, transport and education sectors. The Recovery Plan highlights the actions the Board can take to mitigate against the impacts and encourage the economy to grow in a sustainable way. The Board must work together and across geographical boundaries to make this happen. The Greater Brighton Economic Board continue to lobby government for support in the hard-hit sectors. The Board should consider the opportunities provided by new Government programmes and new funding streams; recognise national calls for a 'greener, fairer and more resilient' recovery and use this to frame recovery actions referring to Government narrative on 'levelling-up'.
 - The COVID 19 Sustainability Recovery Plan details a number of action points to enable the economic recovery of the Greater Brighton region. Amongst these action points are a number of financial actions including the continued lobbying of Government for financial support packages, the monitoring of opportunities for further public sector investment as well as the support of government financial initiatives such as the job Retention Scheme.
 - Evidence shows that the Covid-19 pandemic has widened some existing inequalities, opened new divides and is disproportionately affecting certain parts

of the region's population. National analysis indicates that: · The most deprived areas, where the most vulnerable live, will be where new jobs will be slowest to appear. They are the places where already fragile high streets are further threatened by online commerce. · Sector shutdowns and homeworking have hit low paid workers the hardest. Increased reliance on technology and home working favours the more highly educated, at the expense of others. · The self-employed and those with insecure work arrangements more likely to report negative impacts. · Young people and women are much more likely to work in shutdown sectors. In terms of gender inequalities, women have also been taking a disproportionate share of the childcare responsibilities' parents are shouldering, with likely longer-term impacts on earnings. This recovery plan is an important step in addressing some of these disparities and mitigating these impacts.

- The UK government has committed to 'Build Back Better, Build Back Greener and Build Back Smarter'. It is supporting the development of national and regional recovery packages that support a green and resilient economy. A green and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis will be at the heart of the UK's COP26 Presidency in 2021 alongside the move towards a zero-carbon economy. Clean growth has the potential to create jobs, provide cheaper power and stimulate economic recovery. Low-carbon transportation will reduce emissions and improve public health. Adapting and becoming more resilient to climate change through nature-based solutions will help all parts of society. The actions within this recovery plan focus on the region becoming more environmentally resilient. This is supported by the recent adoption of the region's energy and water plans and the GB10 pledges.

- 1.6 Coast to Capital have produced a Skills Strategy and Action Plan which was developed in response to the affect Covid-19 has had on our region, and details how Coast to Capital will work with the Board and partners to support skills for economic recovery, as well as their medium to longer term priorities. Alongside the Skills Strategy and Action Plan, Coast to Capital have also produced a Skills and Labour Market Impact Assessment providing valuable intelligence on how Covid-19 has impacted on the labour market, the availability of jobs and the skills needs in the Coast to Capital area. This information was circulated to all Councillors and senior officers by way of the Councillor Briefing Note on 27 October 2020.

Welfare of Staff, Members and the Public

- 1.7 Following the announcement of the new National Lockdown, Staff/Contractors must only work from the office (on their allocated day) *if* there is an operational reason why they can't work from home. Those staff whose circumstances have been assessed by HR can continue to work from the office. Otherwise staff must work from home. Field working can continue to take place in accordance with the Council's Safety Management Programme where; there has been a risk assessment undertaken and documented, agreed levels of PPE are supplied and used by staff, and for enclosed settings, if checks have been made in advance to establish if occupants have displayed covid-19 symptoms, have tested positive or are self-isolating. Staff more likely to become ill if they get Covid-19 fall into three categories and HR and the Senior Management Team will be ensuring that they work with staff who fall into these categories to ensure their continued safety:

1. Those over 60: should be especially careful to follow Government guidance, ADC procedures, practice spacing and frequent hand washing.
 2. Clinically vulnerable people include those over 70 years of age, pregnant people and those with health conditions: No guidance has yet been issued but line managers will identify any staff in this category and to takes steps to minimise risk to them, such as by avoiding field work, and record this.
 3. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people: CEV staff must work from home and if they are unable to work from home, they may be eligible for statutory sick pay. Those that are now considered CEV will now be written to by the government this week and if such members of staff receive such a letter, they have been instructed to tell their line manager.
- 1.8 Guidance has been received from MHCLG concerning advice and support for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals during the period of National Restrictions. On 2 November 2020, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) will be issuing updated guidance to CEV individuals with important additional advice on how they can protect themselves during this 4-week period. Arun District Council will work with WSCC to ensure that CEV's are supported.
- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 With the potential for an increase in residents seeking support or advice due to the new National Lockdown, Arun is continuing to liaise with the County Council so that assistance is coordinated via the West Sussex Community Hub. Directing enquiries to the Community Hub as a single point of contact will ensure that residents are properly identified and their issues logged so that their enquiry can be directed to the most appropriate service to meet their individual needs.

Covid-19 Prevalence

- 1.11 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.
- 1.12 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.
- 1.13 Environmental Health (EH) teams are continuing to deliver 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.

- 1.14 There has been a regional request to devolve the contact tracing element of Test and Trace to local authorities (the region being East and West Sussex, Kent and Brighton & Hove). The view is that local knowledge and contacts will make a big difference to improving contact tracing. This is still a national programme, so local authorities will be working with PHE on this and will need to use some of the national systems for the necessary contact recording (so local information will still go into one national system). In West Sussex, the Community Hub is going to play a key role in this, but quite a bit of work is still to be done on this and liaison is underway locally, but the role of districts/boroughs hasn't yet been firmed up and the operating model has not yet been developed. More information should be known by 5.11.20 following a meeting of the Health Protection Board. When more is known, this will be communicated to Arun District Council and officers will work to implement what is required.

Financial Impact of Covid-19

- 1.15 The financial effects of Covid-19 have been severe for the Council, in common with other local authorities across the country. The new lockdown will have further financial implications for the Council.
- 1.16 Government announced the funding allocations for the 4th tranche of Covid funding to local government to address wider cost pressures. Arun's allocation is £498,760.00.

| First Tranche of Covid-19 Funding | Second Tranche of Covid-19 Funding | Third Tranche of Covid-19 Funding ² | Fourth Tranche of Covid-19 Funding | Total Covid-19 Additional Funding |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| £64,612 | £1,609,640 | £264,767 | £498,760.00 | £2,437,779 |

- 1.17 Following the announcement of the National Lockdown from 5 November 2020 and the need to close the leisure services in the District, the Council will be working with Freedom Leisure to address the further financial implications this Lockdown will have.
- 1.18 On 22 September the Prime Minister announced £60 million will be made available to local authorities and the police to support additional compliance and enforcement activities. On 8 October 2020, Arun District Council was informed that it has been allocated £75,314 allocated for Covid enforcement work and officers are currently reviewing the criteria and how it can best be used to Covid-19 enhance our prevention activities.
- 1.19 Following the announcement of the new National Lockdown, business premises forced to close in England are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month under the Local Restrictions Support Grant and £1.1bn is being given to Local Authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly. The Council awaits further details of our funding allocation and our officers will implement the grant scheme as they did previously.

1.20 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, worked hard to ensure that the required self-isolation support schemes were in place by 12 October.

Council Decision-Making

1.21 Since the last report to Cabinet on 19 October 2020, virtual Committee meetings have been held including:

- Cabinet – 19 October 2020
- Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub Committee – 21 October 2020
- WS Chief Executive’s Board – 23 October 2020
- Development Control Committee – 28 October 2020
- Cabinet Briefing for Cabinet on 16 November – 29 October 2020
- Development Control Committee – 28 October 2020
- Cabinet Briefing for Cabinet on 16 November – 29 October 2020
- Housing & Customer Services Working Group – 5 November 2020
- Full Council – 11 November 2020
- Planning Briefing Panel – 13 November 2020

2. PROPOSAL(S):

Cabinet is requested to note the actions taken to date.

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 and it should be noted that the shortfall in funding against total costs to the Council will affect the Council's finances significantly going forward.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

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

8 EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 16 November 2020 as this is a noting paper with no decision to be taken

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None