

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET ON 14 DECEMBER 2020

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

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Nigel Lynn, Chief Executive  
**DATE:** 17 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 3 November 2020 (the date of writing the report to Cabinet on 16 November 2020) to 17 November 2020 (the date of writing this report).
- 1.2 Following the new National Restrictions which have been in place since Thursday 5 November, the impact on the Council is (at the time of writing this report):
  - 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 continues to take place in accordance with the Council's Safety Management Programme. HR and Group Heads are working with staff who are in a category that need extra support, either due to their medical situation, age or personal circumstances.

- Our leisure centres and leisure facilities such as adventure golf have been closed as required by government and the Council will work with Freedom Leisure to address the significant financial implications of this.
- Play areas remain open.
- We are providing the necessary support to the most vulnerable in conjunction with WSCC via the community hub.
- We are working with partners such as Stonepillow and Turning tides over rough sleepers.
- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) – see more information about the Council's grant allocation below under the heading 'Grants'. The Council will work to implement the schemes as we did previously.

### 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 are issued every week.

### Welfare of Staff, Members and the Public

- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 Guidance has been received from MHCLG concerning advice and support for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals during the period of National Restrictions. On week commencing 02 November 2020, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) issued 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.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 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. The number of referrals into the WS Hub are relatively low and none have been referred to the Arun Hub for a local response.

### Covid-19 Prevalence

- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 The West Sussex Covid-19 Health Protection Board continues to monitor prevalence of Covid-19 cases against the previous tier thresholds. 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. Nationally Arun and West Sussex remain amongst the areas with lower numbers of cases.
- 1.11 Two part time temporary Environmental Health Information Officers started work on Monday 16 November. These posts are funded from a £75K government “Marshall fund” announced last month. These EHIOs are field-based and will proactively monitor compliance with the ever changing covid-19 rules, advise businesses of the latest rules and any gaps in their compliance, as well as investigate requests for service. This will usefully enhance the Environmental Health Service’s capacity to provide a visible presence, to help and support businesses to implement compliant Covid-safe practices. Ensuring the Covid-19 regulations are adhered to is not only an important measure in controlling the rate of transmission, but also in order to maintain a level playing field between businesses. Experience so far has been that the vast majority of businesses have been implementing the restrictions effectively, and those that haven’t have responded favourably to advice. The EHIOs can also however gather evidence of breaches for formal enforcement action to be pursued if appropriate in accordance with our Enforcement Policy.
- 1.12 Part of the national test and trace system involves the tracing of contacts of a positive case. The national service attempts to trace/contact all individuals who have been in contact with a positive case, to determine the level of contact and, if necessary, ask them to self-isolate. Due to rising cases nationally, Upper tier/unitary local authorities are being asked, via their Public Health teams, to consider providing additional capacity to the national service by becoming a Local Tracing Partnership (LTP). Starting predominantly in the north of the country where cases have been higher, LTPs have proved an effective addition to the measures being used to control the Covid rate of reproduction (the R rate) and reducing the spread of infection. Preparations are underway to establish a Local Tracing Partnership in West Sussex, working with East Sussex County Council, and with support and guidance from Public Health England (PHE). The LTP will provide additional capacity to the national test and trace service by contacting non-complex positive cases that the national service has been unable to contact within a window of time. It will ensure that those people will be given advice and support as soon as possible, and that details of their contacts are collected and inputted into the national system for the national team to contact themselves. The local service will be managed by the WSCC Customer Experience Service, with dedicated WSCC

Community Hub staff undertaking the contacting. The phone number will be local, which will increase the success of people responding and, unlike the current national system, there will be the facility for people to text email and leave a voicemail by way of a response if they miss the call. District and borough councils can play an important role in supporting the effectiveness of the LTP due to their having contact details for local residents (e.g. council tax, housing, revenue and benefits), to enable contacting when contact information for those who have tested positive for Covid-19 is incorrect or incomplete. A data sharing agreement is currently being considered by Arun. WSCC anticipate going live towards the end of November.

- 1.13 In the current month-long national restrictions period, the Government has introduced specific guidance for those people deemed to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), meaning that they face the highest risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19. Week commencing 02 November 2020, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) issued updated guidance to CEV individuals with important additional advice on how they can protect themselves. We will be receiving some Government funding to provide bespoke support and advice to people in this group who need it.
- 1.14 West Sussex County Council has worked in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care and our District and Borough Councils to implement a wide range of COVID-19 testing sites across the County to control the Covid-19 rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of infection and save lives. These include two Regional Test Sites, two Local Test Sites and seven Mobile Test Sites used on a rotational basis, with further Local Test Sites being currently identified. All sites currently have adequate capacity and availability for testing. For the 7 day period from 28 October to 3 November, over 6,000 tests were carried out across the county. Further sites for LTS's are currently being identified. Part of the St. Martins car park site in Littlehampton is being surveyed for suitability on 30 November with a view to build being completed on 07/08 December for another local walk-through test site. A site has been agreed for Worthing with a planned build date of 18/11/2020. There are no further plans at present for further testing stations locally.

#### 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>	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 and a report on the current position is going to Cabinet on 14 December 2020.	
1.18	Business premises forced to close in England are to receive grants under the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) and Discretionary Grants via the Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG). These two grants to be allocated by 31 March 2022. The Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG - rateable value based mandatory grants) will be dealt with by the Revenues Team. The Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG - Discretionary Grants) will be dealt with by the Economic Development Team. Officers will implement the scheme and make payments on the receipt of applications in line with guidance and once the necessary legal contracts and systems have been finalised	
1.19	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 and payments are being made on receipt of a valid application. As of 13 November, the Council has received 54 self-isolation applications and 15 awards have been made.	
<b>2. PROPOSAL(S):</b>		
Cabinet is requested to note the actions taken to date.		
<b>3. OPTIONS:</b>		
To note this update report or To request further information		
<b>4. CONSULTATION:</b>		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify) - Cabinet	✓	
<b>5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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:** 14 December 2020 – as this is a noting report.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

None