

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday, 30 April 2020
Title of report:	Report on the council's response to the Coronavirus epidemic
Report by:	Chief executive

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To report to cabinet on the response by Herefordshire Council to the coronavirus epidemic in the county and its impact on the council and the county.

Recommendation

That:

- a) **cabinet reviews the progress made in delivering the response to Covid-19 in Herefordshire and determines any recommendations it wishes to make.**

Alternative options

1. It is essential that the council responds effectively to a major public health pandemic. Failure to respond effectively would leave services and residents at greater risk. Therefore there is not a viable option on extraordinary matters of this kind.

Key considerations

2. Coronavirus was declared a world-wide pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The timeline of the crisis is as follows:

Timeline of Coronavirus pandemic	
2019 31 December	Pneumonia of unknown cause, and with no vaccine or effective clinical treatment reported to WHO China Office, in Wuhan, Hubei Province. According to the authorities, some patients were vendors in the Huanan Seafood Market.
2020 10 January	The WHO refers to coronaviruses such as SARS and MERS, in issuing a tool for countries to check their ability to detect and respond to a novel coronavirus
11 - 12 January	China makes Covis-19 genome sequencing publicly available
13 January	First case of novel coronavirus outside of China confirmed, in Thailand.
31 January	First case in Italy.....suspended China flights, declared state of emergency
05 February	First British national in UK diagnosed with Covid-19
11 February	Novel coronavirus disease named Covid-19
17 February	WHO issues guidance on mass gathering and taking care of ill travellers
21 February	WHO Director-General warns that the window of opportunity is "narrowing"
28 February	First confirmed case of British national to catch the virus in UK
01 March	The British government announced a 4 stage Covid-19 'battleplan': Containment, Delay, Research, Mitigate. The country had entered 'containment' phase.
02 March	WHO states that Covid-19 is capable of community transmission
05 March	WHO: Covid-19 "can be pushed back, but only with.....the entire machinery of government"

11 March	WHO characterizes COVID-19 as a pandemic. This is the world's first pandemic caused by a coronavirus
13 March	Europe has more cases, deaths than the rest of the world apart from China.
23 March	British government announces national lockdown.

Coronavirus in Herefordshire – in summary

3. Herefordshire Council found itself fully engaged in responding to the flooding emergency in February. Whilst this was a calamitous emergency for many residents and businesses, it did ensure that Herefordshire Council was in emergency response mode alongside other key agencies as we entered March 2020.
4. The council took the opportunity to review and refresh its emergency response plans, its resilience plans, and its risk assessments fresh from addressing the impact of the floods.
5. With Covid-19 declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020, it was clear that this coronavirus could not be contained indefinitely. It would inevitably spread across the country and the county. The council took steps to prepare for the impact on its services and its ability to function.

The council's response:

- On 12 March the management board declared an emergency, which ensured that joint agency-planning was in place: our Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG).
- On the same day, the West Mercia Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) moved into place, bringing all key agencies together with local government chief executives, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) across the region.
- The council further revised Herefordshire Council's emergency planning, this time specifically for a pandemic.
- Staff recognised as our first priority, instituting a major information campaign and specific actions in support of hygiene control, including heightened cleaning of office touch points and doors.
- Identification of the most vulnerable in our communities as our second priority – and that in this emergency period these would be our two fundamental priorities: by ensuring staff were safe and well, we would be able to support the most vulnerable in our community.
- Extended Better Ways of Working (BWOW) strategy, designed to reduce unnecessary travel, and established digital platforms that would enable full functionality for its management team across the county. This would equip officers and many staff to continue to work effectively from agile or remote-working sites, including at home.
- Established clear website space to advise residents of all government announcements, of important hygiene control behaviours for every resident.
- Established a Helpline, initially training re-deployed staff to be ready for calls from residents.
- Sent out letters to 80,000 residents to reassure that we would continue to deliver core community services, and pointing residents towards our webpage and Helpline.

- Government announced its Operation Shield Plan to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, setting a timeline of one week for councils to have established: we had our hub centre in place, at Halo on Homer Rd.
 - Began food deliveries to those who required shielding, but were not supported by government's Operation Shield – this has meant delivering directly to around 70 households, whilst sign-posting those residents to the direct delivery operation from government.
 - Working with our local GPs and hospital, to identify the most vulnerable in our county, and we have contacted those people to ensure they are supported by family, friends, neighbours or community networks: if not, we have helped them to put the necessary support in place
 - Collected prescriptions from community pharmacies and delivered these to residents, including at weekends.
 - Through our public health team, we have ensured that all staff are fully aware of the critical importance of hygiene control, and social distancing.
 - Through our finance team, grants have been paid out to over 3,000 local businesses, totalling at 20 April £34.8m. Central government is to be congratulated for making grants available to businesses, so quickly: for our part we have ensured that this grant funding reaches qualifying businesses as quickly as possible, following important security/ fraud checks. Many businesses have written or called to express thanks not only for the grant but also for the speed and care in which we have delivered that service.
6. Talk Community has been a central part of our work programme in addressing the challenges of Covid-19 through connecting our staff and services with our communities.
7. It is notable that the residents of Herefordshire have responded very well to the government requirements to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel, and practice social distancing if outside for specific reasons. Compliance has, overall, been good. It is recognised that this is a particular challenge for residents in more confined spaces, with a garden, with young children and with dogs as pets.

Management and Reporting Systems

8. The joint TCG work at a local level across all agencies – police, fire and rescue, health, the voluntary sector – has been effective and continues to work well. An example of this is in our parking enforcement team: from mid-March the council temporarily stopped parking charges in its car-parks to enable key workers to park as close as possible to where they were needed at no cost. This freed up staff in this area of work, which allowed them to be redeployed into working alongside police in enforcing social distancing.
9. The West Mercia SCG – also known as our Local Resilience Forum (LRF) – has met frequently throughout the last 5 weeks, including weekends when necessary. It has been an important forum in which to jointly plan, liaise and pass key messages back to central government. For example, in planning for excess deaths, it has been necessary to model the projected position for many weeks ahead, based on relatively weak intelligence and data: through the LRF we were able to order a temporary mortuary which will shortly be delivered in Hereford.
10. The Herefordshire Council Management Board (chief executive, directors, corporate centre chief officers, and assistant directors) has met 3 times per week and continues to do so, in order to share, jointly plan, and take the most appropriate action on myriad matters arising. It is notable that whilst in early March there were no WebEx, Zoom or Skype Business video-conference meetings within the council, by 20 April, more than 4,000 had taken place. This reflects the busy nature of management and staff in this period,

but also the effectiveness of these new platforms of communication. When we return to more normal times, we will have an increased capacity in effective working without the need to travel to meetings – which has long been part of the BWOW vision, increasing productive time, whilst reducing traffic on our roads.

11. Effective financial management has continued throughout this period, as has staff management. Approximately 200 staff have been redeployed into essential work in support of core community services, and we have further staff numbers capable of being redeployed if necessary.
12. Engagement with staff union representatives has been important and has continued in this period.
13. Weekday Situation Reports have been provided to cabinet members, group leaders and our 2 MPs; Weekly Summaries have been sent to all councillors.
14. Staff have been sent a daily briefing and communication, along with 'keeping in touch' videos by the chief executive and directors have been utilising online forums to stay in touch with staff. The most recent video gained 240 staff views in its first 2 days.
15. A frequent and high level of contact between Herefordshire Council and councils across the wider region and indeed the whole of England, has taken place – with at least 3 such meetings each week. This is important as it enables all councils to share experience, good practice, and challenges. It has also enabled councils to work jointly to influence government decision-making – and this has been evident with recent major ministerial announcements supporting additional funding for local government and for social care.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

16. This has been a critical area – perhaps the most critical area – in terms of supporting staff safety and well-being. It is expected that this will continue. Overall, Herefordshire Council has maintained provision of PPE to key front-line staff whilst also supporting care home staff. However this has been challenging.
17. In the initial phase of Covid-19, until week ending 10 April, the advice from Public Health England (PHE) was the basis of PPE planning.. This identified a level of appropriate PPE use primarily within clinical settings. From week ending 10 April this level was reviewed by the NHS and Public Health at a local level across the country, and in our county: the consequence was that a new set of guidelines were recommended, broadening the recommended use of PPE into non-clinical settings, and extending the PPE items recommended.
18. It is fully recognised that this disease is new and the knowledge that guides decisions is constantly developing, and quite correctly formal national advice changes with this new knowledge. It is important that Public Health England is therefore not unduly definitive in its advice and also listens to the experience of people and councils on the ground. Major changes to PPE guidelines overnight, without consideration of supplies and availability could present further very serious problems for councils with inadequate PPE stocks.
19. This reviewed set of guidelines caused a major increase in PPE demand across the country, creating the very real prospect that PPE supplies that had been acquired to meet previous demand projections, could now be rapidly exhausted.
20. This council's early experience regarding the reliability of government announcements on supply of PPE (shared by the great majority of councils with whom we have discussed the matter) – is that those government announcements have been extremely unreliable.

Repeated statements from ministers over a period of weeks that PPE supplies are meeting the needs of local government have been, unfortunately, wide of the mark. They have caused 3 avoidable problems: the actual lack of physical stock of PPE; the perception that government was doing what was required so the problem of supply must be at the local level; and critically – local government potentially being delayed in its own efforts to secure its own supplies as it anticipated announced supply from central government. At best this aspect of central government work has been poorly co-ordinated; at worst, it has been a hopeless muddle. Given that PPE is projected to be a central part of our work for a very significant period ahead, it is extremely important that national government significantly improves its coordination of national distribution of PPE, and with some urgency.

21. Herefordshire Council took an early decision not to rely entirely on central supply lines of PPE - which is why we have not run out of PPE. We took further action to source PPE from 3 supply routes, including the central route, with the aim of not wholly depending on any single route. This is particularly important as the volume of PPE required by Herefordshire Council is very substantial: for example, over 18,000 facemasks per day. With gloves, aprons and goggles required in balance, these volumes have become a major new requirement for Herefordshire Council not only to physically secure and plan for, but also to budget for. The additional cost of facemasks alone, hitherto an unplanned for cost, is projected to exceed £300,000 per month.
22. The council is now developing forward plans for PPE to be part of our core work for as long as PPE is required – and this may be as long as 18 months.
23. It is important to note that whilst the council has gone to extraordinary lengths to secure PPE, supplies are finite, whilst demand is enormous. In that state, councils – and this could include Herefordshire Council – do face the real risk of running out of PPE stock.
24. There have been many tremendous examples of communities and people supporting each other in this public health crisis. In the case of PPE, the council asked the private sector locally to support us: within a week 2 companies had stepped forward and began to produce hand sanitiser within 2 weeks – an essential part of PPE where people cannot wash their hands. We received those supplies very gratefully. Both companies had no previous experience of producing hand sanitiser and we are very grateful to them: Chase Distillers and Celtic Marches. Having secured these local supplies, the council was able to provide supplies to Yeoman's bus company, for its drivers – having received an urgent request for support.

Care Homes and Domiciliary Care

25. Many of our most vulnerable residents reside in care homes. It has been a concern – and remains so – that the focus of national data gathering has been on numbers of infected people and sadly, deaths, in hospital settings. This has excluded care homes and communities.
26. As colleagues in the same system, we value and hugely appreciate the extraordinary efforts made by our colleagues in the health service. Quite rightly, those efforts are celebrated nationally with enormous respect and appreciation. However it has been a concern that our county's care workers have not been shown the same recognition and value for the work that they do, by central government – certainly in the period until 14 April when the Secretary of State made a very clear statement of thanks on behalf of the government. Quite rightly, every Thursday at 8.00 pm, the national applause is for both our health workers and care workers.
27. It is extremely important that we are able to work very effectively with care homes in the county, which are privately run. It is important that we understand where Covid-19

infections occur as early as possible in order to assist wherever we can in controlling any spread of the virus. As a council, we are increasing our efforts in this regard.

28. It is most unfortunate that on 17 April, care homes across the country received a letter from the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and the NHS specifically encouraging care homes not to respond to enquiries for information by the local authority – across England. This is extraordinarily counter-productive and centrally-controlling, and can only be to the detriment of care home residents: if a local authority is seeking to assess or to gather information on infections or hygiene protocol and practice within a care home, it is because that information is not known. With that knowledge the local authority and local NHS will be in a position to take appropriate action. Without it, we are unable to do so. Seeking to build a barrier to that knowledge in order that the council may be in a position to assist, is very concerning – and would seem to be a further example of central control to the detriment of good local practice.
29. Nonetheless the council's adults and communities directorate is working closely with the local NHS in order to better understand the position in care homes within the county, in order to take appropriate action where required.

Opportunities

30. Above all, Covid-19 is a tragedy for people who succumb to the virus and for their families. First and foremost, the human toll is deeply tragic, and our thoughts are with all the bereaved and their families.
31. There are also opportunities that will arise from the Covid-19 crisis, including:
- The 'new normal' approach to managing and agile working in a Better Ways of Working approach has proven that this is highly effective. By continuing with this approach we can achieve several important outcomes, including making more productive use of management and staff time, instead of taking it up with physical travel, and thereby reducing traffic on the roads of the county – reducing congestion and pollution.
 - If through the council's experience we could encourage other organisations to do the same, where that is a practical choice, traffic reduction could become a significant factor in improving the way the county works.
 - The council's links with communities, volunteers and the voluntary sector has always been strong, but through this Covid-19 experience, these have only become stronger. There is an excellent opportunity to build on this in future.
 - Our links with the NHS have always been strong, and are strengthened by the joint working in communities in this crisis. We must build on this in developing our Talk Community model.
 - The experience of local government leading at a local level has been a positive one across most of the country: this presents a real opportunity for local government to set out to central government the benefits of further devolution of decision-making at a local level.

Looking Ahead

32. It is important to recognise the role that volunteers are playing within the communities of our county. In providing the support for people who are being shielded, and more generally for vulnerable people, the extraordinary daily endeavours of thousands of people in our communities has been and remains very important to all our work in the period ahead.
33. It is encouraging to note that the known infection rates in Herefordshire are lower than previously expected and for example significantly lower than Worcestershire, with greater proximity to the Birmingham conurbation and higher population density. There is also continued capacity with our county hospital, both for general care and intensive care. This is clearly a good position as the infection now appears to be at its peak within the county, and is certainly a major improvement on PHE modelled projections from just a few weeks ago.
34. Looking ahead, the council will need to see central government decisions on how the 'lockdown' will be 'unlocked'. There is a concern however over the lack of clarity from within government as to what 'unlocking' may consist of – let alone its timing.
35. It would seem logical to anticipate that as there is no vaccine on the horizon for Covid-19, any unlocking will need to consider the risk of an upturn in infections. Therefore managing social distancing, following clear hygiene protocols and using PPE where appropriate are likely to become aspects of our lives in the unlocking period ahead.
36. Whilst we cannot be definitive about these matters as we await government decision-making and guidance, we do need to anticipate the likely scenario as we will need to plan for it. There is a clear logic for example, that whilst there is no vaccine, but unlocking takes place when infection levels are greatly reduced, that in order to avoid the infection levels upturning, testing for the virus and tracing of any contacts of Covid-19 symptomatic people, will become important.
37. If so, this will be required in locations across the county, and may in due course lead to testing kits being sent to residents by central government. Through swab-testing, it will be possible to have a broad understanding of the disease and measures would then become possible to contain it. Testing at present would be limited to testing of Covid-19 symptomatic people, and this test would only work in the first 4 days of symptoms presenting. Testing for antibodies, which would identify individuals who have had the disease and overcome it, would be the next logical step: however PHE has made it clear that it has not yet identified a reliable antibody test. It may become a political decision whether or not to progress an unreliable antibody test, rather than no antibody test at all – as indeed appears to be happening in other countries.
38. Further issues for unlocking, include the wearing of facemasks. It is critically important that PPE is not wasted as every bit of it is required by health and social care. However as supplies become more prevalent in due course, many public discussions are taking place now as to whether wearing of facemasks would be an effective barrier to the disease being spread. The formal advice from PHE is that it would not be effective for a number of reasons:
 - By using a facemask, an individual may transmit the disease from hand to face by putting on and removing the facemask.
 - In using a facemask, the wearer may believe that they have an effective barrier to the disease and take less care over their good hygiene control and social distancing.

- Facemasks do not appear to be generally effective in preventing an individual from catching the virus.
39. The difficulty with this logic is that people are very aware that facemasks are being worn in clinical settings, and are indeed now recommended in those and other settings within 2 metres of people. Hence the general public is well ahead of the PHE advice, and many already choose to wear facemasks, including many home-made facemasks.
 40. It also appears to be the case that there is evidence that a facemask may reduce the risk that the wearer spreads the infection. Therefore it seems clear to many that if everybody wears a facemask during the future unlocking phase, then there will indeed be reduced transmission of the disease.
 41. It appears clear too that social distancing and people not gathering in groups will become a very important aspect of ensuring any unlocking does not immediately lead to an infection upturn and further lockdown.
 42. The overall outlook for the county as with the country, in respect of Covid-19, does appear to rest heavily on the availability of a vaccine to combat the disease. The current estimates for this – whilst there is no developed vaccine – is that this period may extend to 18 months, or even longer. It is therefore entirely logical that the period ahead will depend very greatly on how effective are the control measures taken by the general public in reducing the spread of infection. If this is not effective, it is entirely possible that the country faces a subsequent lockdown period – and this could become a pattern of behaviour until a vaccine is made available.

Our workforce

43. The majority of council staff have been working productively from home since 18 March when the government asked those who could work from home to do so. The transition to home working has been successful owing to work undertaken by the BWOW (better ways of working) project which ensured that the vast majority of staff already had lap tops, access to internet telephony and web based meeting facilities such as WebEx.
44. The frontline operational teams have been working closely with public health to promote the national and council guidelines on safe working practice. This includes social distancing, working from home wherever possible and following the latest guidance where visit to people's homes are necessary.
45. At all times the health and safety of staff has been the top priority for the council. The supply of PPE (personal protective equipment), evolving guidance from the government and increasing infection rates in the county have posed significant challenges to the council in its aim to keep staff safe. On 8 April the chief executive personally briefed health and safety trade union representatives via WebEx and provided assurance that the council was effectively managing these challenges.
46. Local testing is now introduced for social care staff, including family support and also for foster carers and workers in residential care where either they or someone in their household is exhibiting symptoms.
47. To manage the new demands of the Covid-19 emergency, the council has redeployed over 200 staff from their usual jobs. This is into a variety of roles from staffing the help line for vulnerable residents to supporting the police to enforce social distancing and providing additional staffing at the crematorium to manage any anticipated increase in deaths. The council was well placed for this redeployment exercise as in 2018 a redeployment policy was endorsed by employment panel and this has enabled the council to make redeployment a normal expectation for staff in such situations.

48. From an absence perspective, Covid-19 has had a relatively small impact on the council workforce and as at 17 April 2020, Herefordshire Council reported the lowest Covid-19 related absence rates in the west midlands region with 1.09% of staff either off sick or self-isolating.
49. The staff response to these fundamental shifts in working arrangements has been fantastic and our workforce has shown itself to be resilient and flexible. Nonetheless, the council has not underestimated the impact that such significant changes can have on staff. New resources on how to keep in touch, maintain wellbeing, manage teams remotely and work safely have all been made available to staff and managers. Staff have also been reminded that 24/7 access to free and confidential counselling continues should they need additional support.
50. On 20 April the government's job retention scheme (furlough) opened, allowing employers to reclaim 80% of a furloughed employee's salary from HMRC. The council is not anticipating making applications to furlough workers as staff who would have been displaced have been redeployed onto the Covid-19 response work.
51. Recruitment activity is still being undertaken in the council via WebEx and this is proving to be a successful experience for the council and candidates. Changes in government guidance means that pre-employment checks and DBS checks in particular are being undertaken remotely and this enables us to maintain our safeguarding standards whilst complying with social distancing which keeps our staff safe.
52. Looking ahead, the key people challenge will be how we support staff to return to normal in the coming weeks and months and what that new 'normal' will look like. Whilst the risk from Covid-19 widely exists it is anticipated that any return to office based and community working will need some significant social distancing measures in place for several months at least and this may include physical distancing as well as more routine use of PPE.

Key service areas

Children and families

53. Work has been undertaken with public health to determine how visits to children's family homes, children's homes and other settings can be safely carried out including the use of PPE. The guidance on the use has changed over the past three weeks and guidance has needed to be kept up to date. The council continues to expect visits for all children who are supported by child in need plans and child protection plans to take place and visits to take place for other children open to us (including early help and children with disabilities) where a visit will support the child's wellbeing and safeguarding. Where physical visits do not take place visits are completed virtually via the use of WhatsApp or by telephone and we are keeping detailed records about this.
54. The data for visits in timescales as reported for the last 3 weeks are as follows:

Visit type	w/e 6.4.2020	w/e 13.4.2020	w/e 20.4.2020
Child in Need	89%	96%	91%
Child Protection	97%	95%	93%
Looked After Children	97%	94%	95%

55. A range of services for example early help and our virtual school for looked after children have been making regular contact with children, families and carers. Support has been given to foster carers to support virtual access to education, alongside all the work being done by schools and settings which have been regularly contacting children who are not attending.
56. A range of meetings are now carried out virtually, including multi agency safeguarding meetings, meetings with the courts and have enabled parents and carers to participate virtually too. This is being kept under review, alongside determining whether this method is proving a barrier to participation. Managers are keeping in regular contact with staff and a range of methods are used to support work and morale, linking with council support and advice.
57. Procedures have been updated with full involvement of legal services and where necessary service changes are recorded as being approved by the director and legal services so that there is a clear audit trail. This includes for example a risk assessment tool to be used for all children supported through education, health and care plans to assess if it is more appropriate for them to be in schools or settings, or staying at home.
58. Staff have worked hard to provide guidance, support and contact to children, families, carers including foster carers. There has also been in contact with residential settings to understand their business contingency plans current staffing situations, working with public health to offer advice and support. This continues.
59. Awareness raising has been taking place of the need to refer safeguarding concerns to Herefordshire's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub as the number of contacts and referrals has dropped over the past three weeks. This is a reflection of the lockdown and that few children are in schools and settings (a significant source of referrals), and also fewer professionals and groups are seeing children. This is also true for domestic abuse referrals, which are starting to increase in the week commencing 13 April, but are not at comparable levels to last year. A series of communications has been issued from the Herefordshire Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership, Community Safety Partnership and Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board raising awareness of safeguarding issues, how to contact services and also raising awareness of Domestic Abuse. This continues alongside the national campaigns and information. The Herefordshire Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership Board has weekly virtual meetings to reflect on the current safeguarding situation and take action where necessary.

Education

60. At the start of the lockdown period there was a significant amount of uncertainty and schools, colleges, 6th forms, alternative provision such as the pupil referral unit, home and hospital teaching service did a lot of work reassuring children and staff, providing virtual access to education materials, contacting children, providing access to food in advance of national free school meal initiatives, supported by the council.
61. Schools and settings also established systems to continue to offer education when national guidance stated that schools (and settings) should remain open for children of key workers where arrangements could not be made for them to remain at home, and for vulnerable children including those that had a social worker where there was not a serious health condition that would put the child at risk. There has been a lot of innovative work by the sector, operating virtually, in constant contact with pupils, providing a wealth of advice and support via their websites for example and providing wider support for families (including contact, support and food) and the making of masks for distribution to health professionals

and key workers. This is truly to be commended given the anxiety facing all who are still working during a lockdown situation.

62. The council has worked very constructively with the whole education sector, offering support, advice, solving particular issues including relating to free school meals, accessing alternative schooling and developing local solutions to the challenges the pandemic presents. At least twice weekly update bulletins have been provided by the directorate to schools and settings with the help of the communications team.
63. Since lockdown, education settings have been open in each of the towns and Hereford. Of 161 pre-school settings, 77 closed (mainly private nurseries) but capacity was established in the remaining 84, including opening 2 new nurseries where needed. Over 20 schools have stayed open throughout for critical workers and vulnerable pupils with around 80% of all settings staying open in some form. All 3 multi-disciplinary special schools are open for these groups of pupils and those with education, health and care plans where it would be more beneficial for them to attend. The council has also issued a fresh contract (time limited) to offer wrap around care in two towns for 8.00am to 6.00pm shift workers and offered Free School Meal (FSM) vouchers to over 40 families at risk of food poverty. We have engaged with the voluntary sector to support families of the shielded or for whom the national FSM scheme was not available.

The future

64. Services continue to reflect on the daily changing situation, incorporating national guidance and trying to anticipate issues before they arise, working with children and young people, their families and carers, council services, schools and settings, members, partner agencies and communities, and national organisations such as the Department for Education. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in demand for early help and safeguarding services (for the council and for other agencies, including schools and settings) over time in response to the effects of the pandemic, the economic downturn on children and families, isolation and the potential impact that has on for example, emotional wellbeing, mental health and the effects on children and young people of domestic abuse. At some stage there will be a return to education for greater numbers of pupils though this is hard to predict in terms of what form this might take, but significant work will need to be undertaken by services and with schools and settings to enable this and to support those arrangements once in place.

Adults and Communities

65. From the early days of the Covid-19 emergency, the council has assumed a leading role in Herefordshire's whole system response. It is uniquely positioned for this lead role, encompassing key strategic and people centred functions in adult social care, public health, commissioning, housing and communities. The council has therefore been integral to the Local Resilience Forum, Gold and Silver Groups, working in partnership with local NHS, police and other partners, connected to Government and national networks. Robust internal arrangements have been established to ensure communication and information flow within all services.

Adults and Communities has focused on rapid development and implementation of;

- Planning and monitoring whole population health and resilience
- Mobilisation of community action, co-ordination and communication, enabling local self-help, volunteers and identifying people who need support.
- Support and protection of the most vulnerable people

- Building capacity in the care sector and protecting local health services to ensure sustainable response to Covid-19
 - Compliance with rapidly evolving law and government policy
66. The council has established a 4 tiered approach in support of residents, addressing;
1. Talk Community Whole population prevention and action
 2. Project Shield for people with health needs specifically vulnerable to Covid-19
 3. Project Brave, for vulnerable, chaotic and excluded groups whose needs escalate during time of crisis
 4. People with immediate and complex needs requiring formal care services
67. The council's approach to tiers and local pathways has already been recognised and followed regionally and nationally.

Whole population health and resilience

68. **Public Health** has undertaken advance planning to track national development of Covid-19 and ensure local preparedness and system wide understanding. This has enabled workable Herefordshire approaches, including to excess deaths and hospital capacity. It has used national channels to ensure up to date local intelligence and inform communication to the public and best practice around controlling the spread of the virus. **Public Health** professionals have provided expert advice on infection control to support implementation of social distancing and development and targeting of local testing and the use PPE. They have also advised and supported the working practice of a range of council teams including adult social care and waste disposal. They have advised upon communication and support for young people and families through schools and other services and on issues including nutrition for the Shield group and behaviour and communication among vulnerable people.
69. The council has also ensured that commissioned public health commissioned services including substance misuse, public health nursing, sexual health and stop smoking are targeted to support the most vulnerable people during the emergency and help prevent spread of the virus. The council has been supporting the emergency response of local food services including food banks and is working Herefordshire Rotary around families who are vulnerable and reluctant to engage. A public health communications plan has been developed in response to Covid-19, including a range of new information on the council website and on WISH. These will act as reference points and trusted sources with the intention also of supporting debate on social media.

Community action and co-ordination

69. The **Talk Community** programme acted rapidly as the emergency began to ensure communication with the general public, mobilisation of Herefordshire's volunteers and local networks and identification and support of vulnerable people. Talk Community has led the **Tier One** response from the commencement of the national lockdown, establishing a 7 day **Co-ordination Centre**, promoted to all Herefordshire households.
70. This supported a huge call to arms of local people to help people in their local community, with more than 1,300 experienced and first time volunteers. 45 council staff have been deployed to support the Co-ordination Centre, along with many others assisting with infrastructure and administrative roles. In addition, 70 employees have been deployed as community link workers at ward level and in working with parish councils, local community organisation and volunteer networks. Talk Community is working strategically with

Herefordshire's established voluntary, community and faith organisations to inform, support and co-ordinate the community response.

71. The **Tier One** focus has been on a strength based approach, enabling people to make their own resilience plans, depending on trusted friends, family, neighbours and their local community. Talk Community has then used the volunteer network to supplement where needed, particularly focused on collection and delivery of food, supplies and medication, along with pet walking, befriending and vital social contact. The community response has benefitted from the excellent established culture of volunteering in Herefordshire, but has also identified and addressed gaps in local support across the county.
72. By 20 April, the **Co-ordination Centre** has taken 2,133 calls from the public and arranged a total of 1,262 different services to be provided to 1,268 vulnerable people. This has included 614 deliveries of medication or health/care supplies and 921 food deliveries. All this support will continue through the volunteer network and council staff during the period of the emergency.
73. **Veteran Support Centre:** whilst the centre is temporary closed volunteers have been organised to directly support veterans including those coming through the council's helpline. This will cover shopping, medicines, care and mental health
74. Talk Community has also established **Tier 2** to implement **Project Shield** to protect people at serious risk of critical illness for 12 weeks. Since the Government announced Shield at the end of March, there has been a challenging process of identifying all those affected who may need support, interpreting changing government information and multiple lists of people. Working with the local NHS and through community link workers, the council has now identified up to 9,000 people within Project Shield. 50 council staff have now been deployed to contact everyone individually to see who will need specific support. Hundreds of Talk Community volunteers with DBS checks are receiving some initial training to become **Shield Buddies** to support vulnerable Shield patients with social contact and access to appropriate help. Shield patients are also amongst those receiving food and medication supplies through the Co-ordination Centre and volunteer networks.
75. **The Emergency Delivery Hub** was established on Saturday 28 March to provide food parcels on behalf of the Government to residents on the NHS England shield list who are vulnerable to Covid-19 because of an existing medical condition. First deliveries were made on the day of opening using food supplied. This was due to be a stop-gap until the direct delivery of government food parcels were established. However, the council decided to continue with the food packages (with own purchases and donations) as there was a delay in people signing-up for food parcels and a delay in delivery. Also the week of 6 April saw some deliveries of the government parcels missed as the task was moved from one supplier to another. Referrals are made through the Talk Community help-line, checking first if residents are "shielded" and cannot be support by friends, families or the wider community. The council's food delivery service will reduce over the next few weeks as "shield buddies" will provide shopping to supplement the government food parcels. Shield Buddies will be volunteers that have come forward to the council matched with residents from the shielded list.
76. As a sub-set to the hub the Emergency Pharmacy Delivery Service is in place to support the health sector facing challenges in the distribute of medicines – again this is where there is not an existing network to support an individual or an existing delivery service, and can be shielded and non-shielding residents. This is run by the Library Delivery Services using their logistic and stock management skills.

77. The Emergency Delivery Hub is also the distribution centre for PPE. This involves supplies coming in from the government or the council's own purchased supplies to support care services and care homes.
78. Safe Home is a scheme to support people coming out of hospital with food and toiletry provisions to last them a couple of days until their support networks are in place. The boxes are prepared at the hub and distributed by Diocese of Hereford.
79. Rapid response team is being established to deliver food boxes at short notice. This is in response to a request via the helpline or web form coming through that is urgent after deliveries have been made. This tends to be on a Friday afternoon.

Support and protection of the most vulnerable people

80. Adult social care has adapted its working practices to ensure that the most vulnerable adults continue to receive timely and essential support. This relies on the flexibility and commitment of the council's own social care workforce and that of contracted care providers and the council is focused on ensuring that all workers are protected and able to work safely. Staff were moved into working "control groups" to minimise the risk to service disruption in advance of government guidance. A local approach to easements of the Care Act and other key legislation has been developed to implement rapid legislative changes. This will ensure people at risk and in crisis receive support whilst providing safeguards in relation to vulnerable people generally. All safeguarding and urgent casework is being maintained.
81. The Housing Solutions Team, working in partnership with Vennture and other agencies has arranged for the safe accommodation of more than 70 vulnerable **homeless people** including rough sleepers in hotels and other temporary accommodation. These are in addition to the 40 or people routinely supported in temporary accommodation. Outreach workers continue to engage with the very small numbers who continue to appear or have refused accommodation. The work around homelessness is part of **Tier Three**, known as Project Brave and is undertaken in compliance with directions from and reporting to MHCLG. Accommodation for 70 people is costing around £3,000 nightly, partially offset by some funding from MHCLG. Supporting this homeless group in accommodation is very challenging, relating to the comprehension of social distancing and other rules and management of substance misuse and the wider health needs and vulnerabilities of this group. Also within **Project Brave**, commissioners are supporting providers to ensure safe support of vulnerable people in contracted accommodation services and scoping of support to much wider groups of vulnerable people with mental health needs or chaotic lifestyles.
82. The council is leading with police, the contracted provider and others a multi-agency partnership to identify and protect victims of domestic abuse who are at increased risk during the emergency and facing greater barriers to seeking help. New public messaging has been communicated, aimed at victims and others, alongside practice guidance to professionals and volunteers. A variety of new and covert means for victims to communicate have been established and promoted. Additional dispersed accommodation has been sourced from a housing provider for victims, along with support, which will also free-up space in the Women's refuge. A new network of trained volunteer community ambassadors is being implemented rapidly, along with additional support for children and hard to reach groups.

Sustaining capacity in the care sector

83. Commissioners acted quickly to establish comprehensive offers of support to providers in the care sector, particularly focused on care homes and domiciliary care but now expanded further. Regular teleconferences two or three weekly for each sector are providing updates, information, resources and support, typically to 40 or more providers. A comprehensive financial package has been offered to protect providers, sustain and extend capacity, including 13% increase in fees for up to 13 weeks with a weekly cost of £118k, weekly payment to support cash flow and paying for all planned care.
84. There is dedicated emailing with frequent updates on legislation and guidance, daily performance monitoring and now a comprehensive provider support hub. This will focus on systematic support for care homes including a proactive approach to need and risk and co-ordinated data collection and monitoring. There is also enhanced support of workforce recruitment and retention. The cost of wider increase in services and capacity including within block contracts is in the region of £420k weekly.
85. Capacity in the **Home First** service is growing through continued recruitment. Community Equipment stock has been expanded by up to 50%, alongside establishing 7 day operation of delivery and collection. Occupational Therapy assessment is continuing and prioritising risk of injury, hospital discharge and safe independent living with access to support in emergency.
86. Commissioning has worked tirelessly to try to ensure effective distribution of PPE supplies throughout the care sector, collating demand, sourcing supplies, interpreting rapidly changing government policy and co-ordinating distribution with military/other partners.

Increasing capacity and supporting hospital discharge

87. Commissioners and adult social care operations have worked closely with NHS partners to design and implement multiple discharge pathways to protect hospital services and interpret changes in legislation. A new integrated hospital discharge service has been established, integrated discharge hub and integrated complex care team, which brings together the **Home First** and **NHS Hospital @ Home service**.
88. A new **Talk Community Home Safe** service has also been established to support discharge of people who don't need a package of formal care, utilising a volunteer network from the Diocese of Hereford and packs of essential food supplied by the council. The broker service has been extended to 7 day operation to support hospital discharge and increased capacity in the sector.
89. New discharge to assess provision has been established, alongside expansion of some block contracts and extended capacity for people to step down from hospital care has been rapidly mobilised in local accommodation. **Hillside Centre** is being rapidly re-developed in 6 weeks to provide additional residential home capacity and is on schedule to open in early May.

The future

90. The council and its partners have innovated in a variety of ways in supporting adults during the emergency and circumstances have required changes of practice and approach. There will be great interest in sustaining some of these new ideas and ways of working, notably in relation to hospital discharge, homelessness and provider relationships, as well as general preparation for emergencies. As the crisis recedes, the different options and models will be weighed and reviewed with partners. Some changes have involved

significant additional cost which may not be sustainable whilst a few may have generated cheaper ways of doing things. Financial factors will be evaluated with care in recommending future strategies.

Economy and Place

91. The Economy and Place Directorate responded immediately to the crisis through a fundamental reorientation of activities and changes to working arrangements. The focus has been on supporting the council's response and delivering essential services. This required decisions to be taken to rapidly suspend certain services, redesign essential services that need to be maintained and increase capacity of some key services to meet predicted increased demand arising from the pandemic.
92. Significant changes were required to public transport resulting from schools only remaining open for the children of key workers. The service continues to provide transport to school when required and throughout the holiday period. The county bus network has been redesigned in partnership with operators to meet education requirements and provide a core network of bus services to meet the needs of key workers. This work included ensuring that, as key service providers, bus operators were provided with certainty of income and support in accordance with government guidance to enable them to continue to operate. Community Transport providers across the county are supporting vulnerable and isolated people and it has also been possible to redeploy school transport services delivered by taxi operators to support patient discharge from health facilities and delivery of food from food banks.
93. Whilst most public realm and highway services have continue to be delivered, a revised Highway Maintenance Plan has been developed and adopted to ensure work carried out on our behalf by Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) is in line with current restrictions and that the workforce is protected. In addition, BBLP are supporting a range of activities including the use of staff and fleet to distribute PPE from the distribution hub to over 100 sites across the county.
94. Working with our contractor FCC, the council's household waste collection services have continued with social distancing measures in place to protect frontline workers. This essential service has received considerable praise and thanks from residents for maintaining service throughout the period. In order to comply with government guidance it was necessary to close Household Recycling Centres and whilst this will continue to be kept under review in line with any changes to guidance, residents are encouraged to seek to minimise waste where possible. Advice and support has been provided on the council's website to encourage the use of home composting and other measures to reduce waste.
95. Museums, Libraries and Archive services buildings were closed until further notice. However, an enhanced offer of e-books, audiobooks and online book groups is being provided to library users, along with access to archive materials. Libraries staff who normally operate the delivery services to vulnerable clients have been re-deployed to operate the Prescription Delivery service as part of the Covid-19 response which is providing essential medicines to isolated and vulnerable residents.
96. In order to reinforce advice to minimise non-essential travel all car-parking charges countywide were suspended and the bus station car park in Hereford was allocated exclusively for key workers needing to access to hospital. This was quickly put in place and welcomed by the NHS in supporting their staff. This also allowed for the redeployment of Civil Enforcement Officers from the parking team to support the enforcement of social distancing. Alongside staff redeployed from other regulatory services, daily patrols are in place working alongside the police and supported by CCTV to encourage compliance with the restrictions on social gatherings and business closures. This has been well received

by communities and the level of compliance across Herefordshire continues to be generally good.

97. These patrols have been backed up by work on behalf of the HSE, undertaken by environmental health officers to ensure that factories and warehousing observe social distancing. The trading standards teams have also been tasked to tackle rogue traders trying to exploit the current situation.
98. The Planning Service has fully adapted to the new restrictions by relocating the entire workforce to work from home and continue to process applications. This is key to continuing to ensure the development industry can restart when restrictions are lifted. Following the changes to legislation, the first virtual planning committee has been scheduled for 12 May.
99. Given the potential impacts of the pandemic, the Bereavement, Registrars and Coroners Services have quickly, sensitively and professionally made arrangements to ensure the service is ready to meet potential predicted demands working closely with public health to ensure all appropriate preparations are in place. This has included the provision of temporary facilities, changes to registration arrangements to comply with government guidance and the training and redeployment of staff. This is now fully operational and able to meet the predicted demands.
100. Property services has effectively managed the corporate building closures, closure procedure and vacant building management. Working with economic development and colleagues in Adult Wellbeing we have secured the availability of key worker accommodation and the potential provision of additional extra care accommodation to meet potential increased demand.
101. The restrictions in place have had a significant impact upon the construction industry and this has led to the majority of capital projects being placed on hold. Where this has been necessary, we have worked with the relevant contractors to ensure the sites have been left in a safe condition. A review of all capital programme projects has been carried out to ensure the implications are understood and preparations are made to complete projects once circumstances allow.
102. Other activities have included supporting the sourcing of PPE, liaising with supermarkets to help co-ordinate services to those requiring food deliveries through food banks/ volunteer network and promotion of businesses providing delivery or collection services to those self-isolating, and on the WISH website.

Understanding the impact on the local economy and supporting business

103. The impact of Covid-19 on local businesses and the economy is considerable and widespread, as elsewhere. To date this has primarily been due to national lock down restrictions on trade rather than levels of sickness in the workforce.
104. Some of the sectors that have been ordered to close such as non-essential retail, tourism/ hospitality, and restaurants are seasonal, and are currently missing the start of their peak season with the end of the lock down period not yet known. Manufacturers have reported significant issues, either needing to suspend operations due to not being able to meet the social distancing requirements, and/ or their supply chain has been affected. This has led to thousands of people being put on furlough, potentially on reduced wages for an uncertain period. Agriculture is now starting to enter a period where seasonal workers will be required, and are concerned about access to labour and their ability to meet social distancing requirements.

105. In response to the emerging Covid-19 emergency, the government announced that grants of £3,000 would be made available for business claiming Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rate Relief – the Small Business Grant Fund. As the full scale of the impact of Covid-19 on businesses became apparent, on 17 March, the government expanded the value of the grant to £10,000.
106. At the same time, on 17 March, the government also introduced a further Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, under which grants of either £10,000 for properties with a rateable value of up to £15,000; or £25,000 for properties with a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 could be awarded.
107. Herefordshire Council as the billing authority is responsible for delivering the grants to eligible businesses in Herefordshire. This created a number of challenges as the council does not hold valid bank account details for the majority of the eligible businesses. A new process was devised and officers commenced contacting businesses to confirm their bank account details and their eligibility. The number of businesses in scope is estimated to be in excess of 5,700. A number of businesses have been identified as not eligible, for example they ceased trading before the 11th of March. A number of businesses have approached the council to confirm that they were trading before the 11th of March but had failed to register for business rates, if they meet the criteria the grants are being paid and the businesses referred to the VOA for a business rate assessment to be carried out.
108. The council made the first payment of grants on 30 March, with £8.4m paid by the end of March, by 9am on 20 April £34.82m in grants has been paid to eligible businesses, this equates to 56% of eligible businesses with further grants being paid every day. On 01 April the council received £62m from Government as a payment on account to help with the council's cash flow.
109. On 17 March Government announced that businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England will not have to pay business rates for the 2020 to 2021 tax year. This has required a significant re-billing exercise to issue revised bills to the affected businesses. The impact of this adjustment has seen the amount to be collected by Herefordshire Council reduced by over 80%. Government has made a payment on account to help support the cash flow implications of this.
110. Whilst the government support for businesses has been largely welcomed by those it benefits, there are many that are not eligible for the grant support and have struggled to access the loan schemes. Even where the furlough scheme helps meet 80% of staffing costs, businesses continue to face significant on going overhead cost (such as rent, bank financing, utilities etc). Smaller and medium sized businesses are concerned that they will soon use their available cash if the lock down goes on for much longer.
111. The Marches LEP has launched a survey to track impacts. The initial results circulated on the 16th April indicate that 42% of businesses have experienced a complete loss of sales/revenue, 16% experienced a drop in sales/revenue, and 26% significant issue with cashflow. 52% of those who have responded to date are not eligible for the business grants as not in receipt of business rates relief, 49% have furloughed staff, and only 13% have applied for/received Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.
112. A business advice hotline and e-mail dropbox was quickly established by the economic development team, which to date (20 April) has answered over 500 enquiries. Information on the support available is regularly updated on the Marches Growth Hub website and weekly support meetings with business leaders and support organisations engaging on key issues. This support for business has been alongside the council's finance team which very quickly responded to prepare for and deliver the national grant payments to local businesses.

113. **Fastershire:** Gigaclear and Airband continue to operate under contract with Herefordshire Council to deliver superfast and ultra-fast broadband network across the county. Fastershire has also introduced a “Keep Connected” grant of up to £500 for any non-profit making group to purchase software and equality to electronically communicate to their member and the wider community – with over 40 applications: www.fastershire.com/keepconnected for details. To support businesses webinar sessions have been arranged providing training and information.

The future

114. The services provided by the directorate continue to be kept under review in the light of government guidance and where necessary further changes will be implemented to ensure continued compliance.
115. The council will be crucial to rebooting the local economy as the lockdown restrictions are lifted by government. Although the details of how government intends to lift the current restrictions are not yet available, it is likely that this will be done in a phased way over time. Work has commenced with the Marches LEP and other partners to develop a comprehensive recovery plan which reflects the diversity of the Herefordshire economy.

Corporate services

116. A number of staff have been diverted to dealing with the processes of paying the grants and the business rates re billing exercise this has created some challenges in closing down the 2019/20 accounts, but this is not expected to delay the production of the out turn report. Government has extended the timescale for the completion of the audit of the accounts we are speaking to Grant Thornton about how they can carry out their audit work in the current climate.
117. All council and committee meetings are in the process of converting to remote access meetings. This has involved a review of the new legislation and adapting the new powers to the council’s constitution. The AGM has been postponed with all appointments carrying over until the next meeting. This will be the councils first remote public meeting. We have procured Zoom pro as a platform and created new operating procedures and guidance for councillors, the public and officers to ensure with training, that these meetings can take place.
118. Advice has been provided on the impact of the New Coronavirus Act 2020 and the 37 new regulations that have been brought into effect. A daily legal update has been provided to the management team for them to be kept abreast of the law and guidance and the impact for Herefordshire council. The council’s scheme of delegation has been updated as new powers have been conferred on the authority and proper officers appointed.
119. Forthcoming decisions and key decisions taken in the last year have been reviewed to understand any time sensitive issues and the impact on the capital programme reviewed.
120. Emergency powers in our constitution have been used by the chief executive and directors. This has involved 29 decisions to date covering such matters as closures of playgrounds to additional payments to adult social care providers. These decisions are published as record of officer decisions and will be reported to full council in the normal course of business.
121. All court cases have been assessed for suitability for moving to remote hearings and are progressing well.

122. Commercial services have been supporting the sourcing of PPE. This involves finding suppliers so services can order the stocks they need for themselves and care facilities. This included a call out to suppliers via the procurement portal – this provided a good response but disappointedly a limited numbers of local suppliers.
123. Pre Covid-19 lock-down the commercial services team commissioned a company called Social Value Business to assess and progress the council's approach to supporting local social value through generating and retaining local wealth. This work will continue as even more important in supporting the recovery phase but will change in approach as the Covid-19 emergency is being addressed.
124. There have been challenges for IT services to support the rapid switch to mobile working with pressure being put on the VPN (virtual private network) service. With a rise in conference calling and email, though not designed for this level of use, the system is holding up well. There has also been the urgent deployment of lap-tops, headsets and a steep learning curve on IT skills which has been supported through online training.
125. IT have also designed the SharePoint site as a register of all help-line queries – effectively building a CRM (customer relationship management) system.
126. The council has had a significant task to ensure the public are well informed of both national and local issues. This includes maximising social media and establishing dedicated webpage for Covid-19 for easy find information. Recognising that not everyone can access information digitally there has been media adverts and features, along with letters to residents from the chief executive. The team has organised internal communications every weekday, along with picking up communications of the Tactical and Strategic Command Groups.
127. Performance reporting and oversight has been scaled back across the council to focus on critical business functions. This has been replaced in some services, by additional reporting to support the Covid-19 response; such as the talk Community reporting and some operational reporting in adult and children social care. As a result of the focus on critical functions, it is anticipated that that some areas of performance will be impacted as Covid-19 response activities are prioritised.

Equality duty

128. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
129. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of

services. As this report provides a summary of activity undertaken, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty. These considerations are set out in each of the relevant reports informing the decisions and will inform any future decision making.

Resource implications

130. On 19 March Government announced a grant of £1.6bn would be paid to Councils to cover the additional financial pressures of responding to the Covid 19 crisis, Herefordshire's share of this amounts to £5.6m this was received on 27 March 2020. On 8 April, Government announced an additional grant of £1.6bn would be paid to councils, at the time of writing the allocations have not been announced. At this point it is not possible to accurately predict the total financial pressure on Herefordshire of responding to the Covid-19 crisis, but it is expected that all of the government grant will be required, and the financial cost is likely to exceed the two grants.

Legal implications

131. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

132. The content of the report identifies the key areas of risks and the mitigation the council has taken. Risks have been collated and reviewed by the senior management team during their meetings. The risks are logged and categorised under an overarching theme and scored by the corporate centre.
133. The advent of Covid-19 has introduced a number of previously unidentified risks, or heightened some already identified.

These include:

- Risk to the vulnerable people in Herefordshire. There is a risk that Covid-19 impedes the council's ability to carry out its normal services/business as usual within communities.
- Care Homes. Covid-19 presents a new level of risk for the management of care homes within the county, controlling infection, avoiding cross-contamination, management of hygiene control.
- Risk to our staff. Until a balance between national supply of PPE and local demand is established, there remains a risk that PPE stocks will be unavailable for periods of time in the months ahead – despite the very best efforts of the council. Note: this is not currently the situation.
- Risk to the council's finances. The council has successfully navigated through the challenges of years of austerity and entered the Covid-19 crisis in a sound financial position, however dealing with the many challenges of the crisis has introduced huge new strains on the council's finances in this financial year, and we depend upon government continuing to make good on its commitment to provide the financial support that is required.
- Risk to the local economy. Whilst an enormous effort and investment has gone into supporting businesses, there is no doubt that the local economies of the county will be hit hard by Covid-19. This in turn could impact council income from e.g. business rates, car parking and planning – which are used to support delivery of local services.
- Risk to the Shield Covid-19 response. The list of identified vulnerable people in our county has increased substantially, from 3,300 to over 9,000 – in the last 3 weeks: driven by NHS updates emerging from across primary care. Dedicated as we are to reviewing every person on this list (we have over 90 council staff redeployed on that

work), there is a risk that with this enormous increase in number, some individuals are missed who require specific kinds of support.

- Risk of national v local messaging. The core messages and guidelines have emanated from Whitehall and appear very Whitehall/ government centred. In Herefordshire there may be important issues that the council and our communities believe need to be locally agreed that do not always tally with a 'one-approach' from national government.
- Risk to strategic objectives. There are very important projects that have been effected and delayed in completion, by Covid-19; e.g. the development of Station Approach for student accommodation, the Shellstore development, The Cyber Security Centre. It will be important that strategic projects are completed and that planned major new projects do move forward.

Consultees

None

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified.