

Minutes



To: All Members of the Cabinet,
Chief Executive, Chief Officers

From: Legal, Democratic & Statutory Services
Ask for: Deborah Jeffery
Ext: 25563

CABINET 20 APRIL 2020

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

P Bibby, T L F Douris, T C Heritage, T W Hone, T R Hutchings, R M Roberts, R Sangster, J D Williams (Leader of the Council)

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on 20 April 2020 as circulated, copy annexed, conclusions were reached and are recorded below:

PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS

1. MINUTES

- 1.1 The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

- 2.1 There were no questions from Members of the Council to Executive Members.

3. PUBLIC PETITIONS

- 3.1 There were no public petitions.

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4. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Decision

- 4.1 Cabinet noted Hertfordshire County Council's planning and response update to Covid-19.

Reasons for the decision

- 4.2 As of 7 April 2020, Public Health England Statistics has confirmed that 213,181 people in the UK have been tested for Covid-19. The latest figure in terms of the accumulative number of individuals hospitalised in Hertfordshire as of 21 April 2020 is 1808. When local authority areas are reported, Hertfordshire appears quite high up in those reports, however, Hertfordshire does have a sizeable population at just under 1.2million; the proximity to London will have been a factor in the number of cases locally, as well as the number of people that travel internationally who live within the county; for example, at the start of this pandemic it was clear that people had been travelling to and from the far east and to northern Italy, who were coming to the county and quickly identifying they had caught the virus.
- 4.3 Cabinet noted much of the response was being co-ordinated by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group which is an element of the local resilience forum. (Across England and Wales there are resilience forums essentially in each police constabulary area, established under the auspices of the Civil Contingency's Act). The County Council has had a significant role in this as the Chief Fire Officer is the Chairman of the Strategic Co-Ordinating Group and has played an important role in co-ordinating our response.
- 4.4 The Government has introduced guidance to support and 'shield' members of the population who are very high risk from severe illness from Covid-19. Individuals who have any underlying health conditions listed in the Public Health England [Guidance](#)¹ have been advised to stay at home and avoid any face to face contact for 12 weeks. Further activity by GP practices to identify clinically vulnerable people is underway and will add to the numbers on the Shield Patient List.
- 4.5 Adult Care Services continues to work in close partnership with NHS organisations across Hertfordshire to help create capacity in the acute hospitals and continue supporting the thousands of residents across Hertfordshire who need adult social care support. £26m of Local Government Emergency Funding has been allocated to address the pressures being faced across these areas and urgent actions have been implemented to purchase additional care beds and take other measures to increase capacity in non-hospital settings.
- 4.6 Hertfordshire's NHS organisations, including hospitals, community services,

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

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GP practices, mental health services and clinical commissioning groups are working together with Public Health England, NHS England, Public Health Hertfordshire and the Department of Health and Social Care to coordinate their response to Covid-19. Significant steps have been taken to prepare the Hertfordshire health system to cope with the expected surge of patients who are affected by the virus and who may need specialist treatment.

- 4.7 Work is taking place to increase critical care capacity in both Watford General and Lister Hospital in Stevenage, with health providers freeing up hospital resources through the postponement of non-urgent surgery, the discharge of patients who can be cared for at home and the training of staff to support patients with symptoms caused by Covid-19.
- 4.8 The Fire & Rescue Service has received a request from the East of England Ambulance Service to support them with staff to drive and crew ambulances which is currently being arranged. With regard to Household Waste Recycling Centres, as of 24 March 2020, all centres have been closed until further notice. This will remain the case until further instruction from Central Government. This position has been adopted by local authorities across the country.
- 4.9 Children's Services is working to uphold the Department of Education guidance on caring for vulnerable children and young people, as well as new guidance on safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers due to these exceptional circumstances. To support vulnerable children and struggling families during this time of confinement, Children's Services is ensuring that provision is being made to ensure that the correct safeguarding legislation is in place for volunteers to help protect and support these children. Arrangements have been made to ensure Children in Care have access to laptops and appropriate education and children with learning disabilities/physical disabilities are receiving support at home. The Executive Member for Children, Young People & Families confirmed that all young people aged between 0-25 are being protected appropriately.
- 4.10 Cabinet gave thanks to all frontline staff, to all the NHS staff, the constabulary, care workers, teachers, volunteers and the County Council staff for their efforts during this period and for making the Council proud.

Any alternative options considered and rejected

- 4.11 None.

5. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S FINANCE UPDATE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Decision

- 5.1 Cabinet:

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- i) noted the significant financial implications that COVID-19 is having on the County Council, including that the forecast of £35m of cost in the current financial year exceeds the £26m funding made available from Government;
- ii) noted the likely further financial implications in future years, and that current savings plans must continue to be delivered where possible to prevent further deterioration in the financial position;
- iii) noted the lobbying already underway with Government over the financial position, including the letter from the County Councils Network appended; and
- iv) approved the proposed financial package to support communities, as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for the decision

- 5.2 Cabinet considered a report on the emerging financial implications at its meeting of 23 March 2020, and approved immediate measures aimed at supporting critical services. In the two weeks between then and releasing this report, it is apparent that the full scale of the financial implications is significantly greater than outlined in that report.
- 5.3 Following the Government’s announcement of £3.4bn of COVID-19 response grants, Hertfordshire County Council received their £26m share of the £1.6bn support for local authorities COVID-19 pressures on 27 March 2020 to cover the first phase of the response to the pandemic. On 18 April 2020, the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, announced a further £1.6b of funding for Local Government. Further details on how this will be allocated to Councils are yet to be received.
- 5.4 Small Business Grants of £10,000 are in the process of being paid to the economy in Hertfordshire. To date over £50m of grants have been paid to Hertfordshire businesses. Further cash grants of £25,000 for companies operating in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector can now be applied for.
- 5.5 The Council has also been working to support those companies that supply the Council. This support includes moving payments to all the Council’s suppliers to immediate terms, as well as other arrangements to pay for services to ensure suppliers can continue to provide essential services to residents both now and in the future. With regards to residents, additional funding has been put in place to support a widening of Council Tax reliefs for those in financial difficulties.
- 5.6 Officers throughout Hertfordshire County Council have been considering the financial impact of COVID-19, and have broken down the costs into 5 key themes:

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- Where immediate additional expenditure is required to ensure that critical services can be maintained e.g. additional costs of extra staffing for social care providers
- Where the knock-on effects of disruption lead to increased costs of providing services in general e.g. if a foster carer needs to self-isolate and cannot support a child in care, the alternative provision is likely to be more expensive
- Where this disruption leads to reduced income from traded activity (especially where this relates to schools, for example in school meals, music tuition etc)
- Where the need to support our communities means that savings programmes cannot be achieved in the timescales originally planned
- Delay in the Capital Programme delivery leading to increased interim costs where mitigation measures need to be put in place

5.7 It is currently estimated that the overall costs relating to the COVID-19 virus will exceed the £26m (currently forecast in excess of £35m) currently allocated from Central Government as funding for the crisis. On top of this £35m, there is also a pressure of £12m to secure additional care beds to support hospital discharge that the Council expect the funding made available through health to cover. However, these are initial estimates and it would be expected for issues such as cost increases, savings plans and reduced income (including council tax income) to significantly affect the budget plans for the 2021/22 financial year and beyond.

5.8 The majority of the pressures identified to date relate to the first phase of the COVID-19 response. If restrictions continue into the summer and beyond financial pressures will once again mount. The Council will continue to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to make the scale of cost pressures clear.

5.9 In reaching its decision, Cabinet considered the above, together with the recommendations of the Special Cabinet Panel.

5.10 **Any alternative options considered and rejected**

None.

**QUENTIN BAKER
CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER**

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