

COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREA:	Resources
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To 9 th May 2020

KEY ACTIVITY HEADLINES

Revenues and Benefits

- As of Thursday 7th May, we have made 92.4% of payments – 2,276 of 2,462 due. BEIS continue to publish Council's progress on the delivery of these Grants. Last week, PCC were the only Council within Peterborough and Cambridgeshire to have delivered over 90% - the Government target as at the 30th April. Full delivery will result in **£29.5m** of Grant payments to Small and Rural business, as well as retail, hospitality and Leisure businesses.
- Council Tax Hardship funding of **£1.6m** has been awarded to the Council. We are still awaiting the updates to our Council Tax systems, which MHCLG are aware of, in order to apply these £150 allocations to the 7,700 recipients of Council Tax Support.

The Registrars Service

- Following on from the messages over the past 5 weeks, the Registrars Office is now closed to the Public and the service is being delivered remotely. Death registration appointments are available within 1 to 2 days of request.
- In April, 341 deaths were registered. The highest ever monthly total prior to this was January 2018 when we registered 262.

The Bereavement Service

- The Website has been updated for the latest information. Appointments for cremations and burials are still available with no requirement to extend hours of operations. 65 cremation slots are available within the next 10 days as of 7th May. For Burials we have 3 funerals booked for next week and can accommodate a further 12 if required.
- In April we delivered 240 cremations. This is the second highest monthly total for cremations (Jan 2009 – 271)

Property

- We have had 39 queries from tenants on rent and other reliefs. This has led to 4 deferment arrangements to have been set up for rent bills.

Finance

- MHCLG set out on Friday 8th May their revised monitoring template due back to them on the 15th May. The template requests significantly more detail than the April return, including non-collection of tax income. This links into the weekly reporting of expenditure to CMT Gold Group.
- The Council has received almost £11m of support from the Government, but estimated costs are over £18m. This does not include additional costs due to reductions in Council Tax and Business rates collection.
- We are now awaiting equipment from our Bank Barclays to allow us to take payments for services (including food purchases) delivered through the Hub. The new account is open and we have received paying in books for non-electronic payments.
- We are now in the final phase of the production of the draft Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

Procurement

- No new updates further to the revised procurement arrangements now being used because of COVID-19.

RISKS / CHALLENGES (AND MITIGATION)

Finance, Revenues and Benefits:

- Ensuring staff continue to log expenditure linked to COVID-19 properly and validation. We have an online form to log information. Spending is reported to the Gold Management Group weekly, and to MHCLG on a monthly basis. These reporting requirements will change following the updated guidance from MHCLG issued on the 8th May.
- Payment of the £10k and £25k Grants to businesses. We are now down to the final 8% of cases. BEIS have now announced a further scheme for outstanding balances of grant remaining with Councils, mainly for B&B establishments, Charities and premises of multiple business occupation and a single ratepayer. We are awaiting final guidance on how to distribute these funds which is due this week.
- We have relaxed recovery for Council Tax and Business Rates for April and May to help Tax and Ratepayers and have publicised numbers to call the Council to notify ourselves. Presently, estimated collection levels for Business Rates and Council Tax collection are 25% and 5% lower respectively. We will be lobbying government through our professional bodies if additional reliefs are possible.
- We are seeing significant reductions in the Council's commercial income due to Covid-19 restrictions. We will be validating April data against our assumptions to ensure we are accounting for this correctly.

Bereavement and Registrars

- The number of attendees at a small number of funerals have exceeded the safe numbers to ensure Social Distancing. This is being managed by close working with a range of Partners.

Property and Procurement

- No significant changes since last week.

WORKFORCE UPDATE

No significant changes since last week. We have a number self-isolating in the working from Home figures.

Summary	Staff	Work at Premises	WFH and Enabled	In Hub	Notes
Council Staff	97	17	71	9	
Serco	95		95		
Other (NPS)	19	2	17		

FINANCIAL IMPACT (increase in costs / reduction in income)

- The Council has put in place processes to ensure that all costs attributable to COVID-19 are captured properly. As with other Councils, estimated additional costs at £18.3m are substantially more than the £11m of Grant received to date from the Government. Cabinet on the 11th May will discuss the Councils financial position.
- We were the only Council with PCC and Cambridgeshire to have delivered over 90% of BEIS Grants at 30th April. A new scheme for balances of Grant remaining will be launched this week.
- MHCLG have issued new guidance on costs they wish to be informed on the 8th May. This includes Tax Income, Commercial Income and more detail on where COVID-19 costs are being experienced. This is due back on the 15th May.
- The Peterborough and Cambridgeshire CCG is paying for additional capacity to move clients from Hospital into Care and so this does not appear in our figures.

RECOVERY ACTIVITY (plans being considered / future steps)

- The Cabinet Paper on the Councils financial position has a section that is linked to recovery. Areas we need to address include:
 - Financial monitoring delivery and validation in the recovery period and the remainder of the year (including budget preparation);
 - Alternative service delivery methods which Covid-19 has necessitated;
 - Effective lobbying of our financial position both through peer Councils, the LGA and MHCLG will be key – as will it's timing;

- Planning the medium term effects of COVID-19 including: Council Tax and Business Rates income reducing, suppressed external income, increasing demand for services, investment in regeneration schemes to “kick start” our local economy.
- Brexit in December. We must not take our eyes off this as it has the potential for significant impacts on both our economy and overall funding as well as the local economy;
- Notices to enable ceremonies to take place are valid for 12 months. Professional bodies are currently lobbying central government to extend this period to avoid notices having to be retaken.

COMMUNICATIONS

Nothing to report this week.