

COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREA:	Resources
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To 15 th May 2020

KEY ACTIVITY HEADLINES

Revenues and Benefits

- As of Thursday 14th May, we have made 96.6% (2,325 of 2,404) of our payments to applicable businesses and have contacts for 80 of 83 remaining. BEIS have a new scheme, for which guidance came out on Wednesday – a policy will be formulated next week.
- 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

- Further guidance is awaited regarding potential to reintroduce (small) weddings.
- Death registration appointments continue to be available within 1 to 2 days of request.

The Bereavement Service

- Appointments for cremations and burials continue to be well managed with no delays. Our local Key Performance Measure that states whether a funeral at the crematorium is available within 5 days of initial contact continues to be met throughout the pandemic.
- 63 cremation slots are available within the next 10 days as of 15th May. For Burials we have 5 funerals booked for next week and can accommodate a further 10 if required.
- Alan Douglas, Crematorium Supervisor, retired after 20 years service this week. Our thanks and best wishes go to Alan for a long and healthy retirement. Succession plan is being implemented.

Property

- We have had 41 queries from tenants on rent and other reliefs. This has led to 5 deferment arrangements to have been set up for rent bills. 71% of April rent bills have been paid.
- We are preparing premises for further staff following the Prime Ministers guidance on Sunday.

Finance

- The MHCLG monthly return was sent back on the 15th May. We now await feedback on where this data will take further funding applications across the sector.
- The Council has received almost £11m of support from the Government, but estimated costs are now almost £21m.
- The Government announced a further £600m funding linked directly to Care Homes.
- We are now in the final phase of the production of the draft Statement of Accounts for 2019/20. The outturn report will go to Cabinet in June.

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. We have an online form to log information. These reporting requirements now reflect updated MHCLG requirements.
- Setting out a new Policy for further BEIS funding. A group is meeting on Tuesday to take this forward following receiving final guidance. First payments are expected in June across the Country.

- We have seen significant reductions in the Council's commercial and tax income due to Covid-19 restrictions in April. This is being reflected in all monitoring returns.

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

- Undertaking risk assessments on Corporate Building following Government relaxation of Social Distancing in preparation for more users to potentially return to these buildings.

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)

- Cabinet on the 11th May discussed the Councils financial position, this goes to Scrutiny on 20 May.
- We are now at 96.6% delivery for BEIS Grants – 16th best in the UK. A new scheme starts in June.
- The Council completed the May MHCLG monitoring return on the 15th May. Cost have now increased to just under £21m. This was based on April actual data.
- £600m of Grant specifically for Care Homes was announced on Thursday.

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.