

COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREA:	Resources
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To 23 rd May 2020

KEY ACTIVITY HEADLINES

Revenues and Benefits

- As of Thursday 21st May, we have made 97.94% (2,380 of 2,430) of payments to applicable businesses. The final 50 will be the most difficult to complete.
- We have had the final guidance for the additional £1.5m of discretionary payments we can make to business and charities. We expect to have a policy for distribution early in June.
- We are still awaiting the updates to our Council Tax systems, which MHCLG are aware of, in order to apply the £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.
- 73 cremation slots are available within the next 10 days as of 22nd May. For Burials we have 3 funerals booked for next week and can accommodate a further 12 if required.

Property

- We have had 44 queries from tenants on rent and other reliefs. This has led to 6 deferment arrangements being set up. 74% of April and 55% on May rent bills have been paid.
- We have undertaken site visits to preparing premises for further staff/public use.

Finance

- The Council has received almost £11m of support from the Government, but estimated costs are now almost £21m. We now await feedback from the returns we made to MHCLG in 15th May.
- The Government announced a further £600m funding linked directly to Care Homes.
- We will have a draft statement of accounts (not Group Accounts) next week. The 2019/20 outturn report will go to Cabinet in June.
- Initial COVID position was reported to Scrutiny Committee on the 20th May.

Procurement

- No new updates further to the revised COVID-19 procurement arrangements now in place.

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. We have had an initial meeting and now gathering information to formulate the Policy. 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)

- The Council completed the May MHCLG monitoring return on the 15th May. Cost have now increased to just under £21m (not including Tax income). This was based on April actual data. We now await a response from MHCLG relating to the data and possible future funding Tranches.
- Tax income losses projected forward from April actual data could be £26m lower than expected.
- Scrutiny Committee on the 20th May discussed the Councils financial position.
- We are now at 97.94% delivery for BEIS Grants – 7th best in the UK. A new scheme starts in June.

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.