

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE:** 15 DECEMBER 2020**REPORT OF:** MR TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**LEAD OFFICER:** MICHAEL COUGHLIN, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**SUBJECT:** COVID-19: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL - UPDATE

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| ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: | GROWING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY SO EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT/ TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITY/EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES |
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SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Surrey County Council continues to have a vitally important role in leading the ongoing local response to Covid-19, to save lives, protect the NHS, ensure our residents are protected wherever possible and crucial council services continue to operate in these unprecedented times.

The pandemic has demonstrated how people's health and the economy cannot be viewed independently. Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit is one of the priorities of the council's Organisation Strategy so it is critical that we can support people and businesses across Surrey to grow in a way that is inclusive during the economic recovery.

With the end of the second national lockdown and Surrey entering Tier 2 restrictions, the purpose of this report is to set out the latest Public Health information about Covid-19, and update Cabinet on the strategic and sensitive issues arising from the extensive response and recovery work going on across Surrey.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet are asked to note and endorse:

1. The latest public health situation regarding Covid-19, nationally and in Surrey, the transitioning out of national lockdown and the actions being delivered through Surrey's Local Outbreak Control Plan,
2. The latest impacts on Adult Social Care and Children's, Families, Lifelong learning and Culture services and the management and mitigation of them,
3. The ongoing support to vulnerable residents, including through the County Council Community Helpline and the Covid Winter Support Grant scheme,
4. The efforts to monitor and respond to challenges in Surrey's economic and social recovery from Covid, and looking ahead the work to tackle the issues residents and Businesses will face in early 2021 as part of growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The county and council continue to face unprecedented challenges due to the Covid-19 crisis. In addition to the response activity, the council continues to look forward to how it can work with its partners to enable recovery within the county and a return to day-to-day life for our communities following the end of the second national lockdown and more long term into the future.

The recommendations set out in this report ensure Cabinet are appraised of the work going on across the council to protect, sustain and support our residents and communities and the economy of Surrey.

DETAILS:

Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit

1. The pandemic has demonstrated how people's health and the economy cannot be viewed independently; both are necessary foundations of a flourishing society. Low household income and a lack of wealth can cause insecurity, stress, a lack of material resources, unaffordability of health products and services and more. These experiences have measurable consequences for people's health outcomes.
2. Resident engagement over the summer has highlighted a strong desire to support local businesses and looking at how local recovery can be encouraged through innovation, support and funding. Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit is one of the priorities of the council's Organisation Strategy, looking at how we can support people and businesses across Surrey to grow in a way that is inclusive during the economic recovery.
3. Our 'sustainable economy' vision also has a key role to play in our ambitions on socio-economic inclusion. As unemployment levels rise there is a real risk that our most excluded and vulnerable residents and communities become further marginalised and the gap between the best and worst off in our county grows worse. The Community Impact Assessment (CIA), which includes the Local Recovery Index, is a key tool in enabling us to gain insight into how our most excluded residents have been impacted by Covid-19 and we are working with our partners to provide support and advice to residents who need it most.
4. The findings from the CIA also show that we must continue to improve access and awareness of services for all residents, particularly BAME residents, so that economic growth through the recovery from the pandemic is inclusive and something that everyone can benefit from.

Public Health Update

National Lockdown Exit Plan

5. From 2 December, the government reintroduced a [local three tier system](#) approach to restrictions, strengthened in order to prevent a return to a growing number of infections. On 26 November the Government announced that Surrey has been placed in Tier Two: High. The tiers will be reviewed nationally every 14 days, with the next review expected by 16 December

Covid-19 Winter Plan

6. On 23 November the government published a [Covid-19 Winter Plan](#) - a programme for suppressing the virus, protecting the NHS and the vulnerable, keeping education and the economy going and providing a route back to normality.

Covid-19 Surveillance

7. Public Health continue to hold daily data surveillance meetings in order to systematically review Covid-19 data and intelligence and ensure prompt action is taken in line with the [Surrey Local Outbreak Control Plan](#). [The Surrey Covid-19 Intelligence Summary](#) is published Mondays and Thursdays along with a [daily infographic](#) on Covid-19 Alert Levels. Surrey's rate per 100,000 is lower than the rate in England, but there are significant differences in the rates across the county.

Test and Trace Programme

8. [Surrey's Local Outbreak Control Plan](#) is continuously updated in light of new national guidance. The following key actions aligned to the plan have taken place:
 - Surrey's Local Tracing Partnership went live on 26 November, covering Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Runnymede and Spelthorne. From early January, the service will then be available across the whole of Surrey. The partnership is an outbound arm of the Community Helpline and utilises local expertise and knowledge to follow up on those people who have tested positive for Covid-19 but have been unable to be contacted by NHS Test & Trace.
 - Customer Service and Public Health staff have now received training and have access to the national contact tracing database. A local geographic telephone number will be displayed on outgoing calls as this has been shown to be an effective way of increasing call success rates. The service is operating six days a week (Mon-Sat) and in the first five days received 75 contacts from the national test & trace system; 69% of which have been successfully contacted.
 - All boroughs and districts are now implementing Covid Marshal schemes or similar initiatives to undertake proactive physical visits to premises and support environmental health Covid education, engagement and enforcement work.
 - Daily Covid Clinics for schools and education settings are being delivered by Public Health and School Relationships & Support Service colleagues. The clinics provide additional support to assist school leaders in their decision-making when making a change to delivery of learning to cohorts, whole schools or a group of schools.
 - Surrey-based universities continue to manage any cases of Covid within their student and staff communities and are exploring how to offer lateral flow testing to students, supported by the Public Health team.
 - A Care Homes Covid-19 Outbreak Oversight Group has been established to provide a single forum for oversight of current outbreaks in care homes. This will co-ordinate a system response to support those homes by proactively identifying and addressing any issues. All registered care homes should now be able to get tests via the national portal to enable the weekly testing of staff and the testing of residents every 28 days. Lateral flow tests will be made available to all care homes in the county after national lockdown to supplement the current PCR (polymerise chain reaction) testing regime.
 - On 20 November the government announced that regular testing will now be rolled out to care staff working in Home Based Care.

Testing

9. Symptomatic testing is available in Surrey through a variety of different means including drive through Regional Test Sites (RTSs) at Guildford, Chessington, Gatwick, Heathrow and Twickenham, Mobile Test Units (MTUs) in locations across the county and Local Test Sites (LTSs) in areas of greater population density (so far in Guildford and Egham). It is also possible for residents to order a Home Test Kit for up to four people in one household, which arrives the next day after ordering from the NHS website.
10. Lateral flow devices (LFDs) are a clinically validated swab antigen test that does not require a laboratory for processing and can turnaround results within an hour. Early use of this technology will enable us to provide testing to large numbers of people quickly. A strategic direction paper is being developed to consider the appropriate use of lateral flow tests in Surrey.

County Council Covid-19 Ops Group

11. The SCC COVID-19 Ops Group continues to monitor and coordinate resource requirements across services to support business continuity and is working with a reinstated Mobilisation Team to support the resolution of any identified resource issues. This includes providing resource to council services but also where appropriate to support partners.
12. The Ops Group will be providing support to the Mass Vaccination Programme and the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF) Logistics Cell in coordinating resource requests. This will be necessary to ensure the correct teams/services within the council are engaged with, and that there is not an impact on service delivery as a result of supporting this request.

Impact on Adult Social Care services

Designated settings

13. As set out in the COVID-19 update to Cabinet in November, the DHSC has set out requirements for designated care settings for people discharged from hospital who have a COVID-19 positive status. We are continuing to work closely with health partners to ensure people can be managed within community hospital bed capacity, along with exploring options for scaling up the number of beds available at NHS Seacole Centre. Whilst we have not as yet been able to secure designated premises beds within the private residential and nursing home market, we have identified some potential options, although these still require CQC approval. We also continue to work hard to scale up the home-based care and reablement offer to ensure people can go home with the right level of support however intense their needs.
14. On 5 November, NHS England and NHS Improvement directed NHS and social care to carry on as normal until isolation facilities are confirmed. We continue to discharge people who have a Covid-19 positive status by looking at their individual circumstances and the options available. There is some concern in the Surrey system about our ability to place people upon discharge and to manage this within current capacity in community hospitals. The potential to expand capacity at NHS Seacole Centre should alleviate some of this pressure.

Infection Control Fund

15. The first set of payments of the second round of the Infection Control Fund (see November Cabinet Covid-19 update report for further details) have been made to care homes complying with the grant conditions. Work continues to confirm the allocations to community care providers, day care and supported housing providers.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

16. Since 5 November when the new national restrictions commenced, Adult Social Care has been notified of 2,742 clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) residents who are open cases. Our community teams (Localities, Mental Health, Learning Disability & Autism and Sight For Surrey) are risk assessing these residents to ensure appropriate support arrangements are in place.

Impact on Children, Families, Life-long learning and Culture services

17. Most services are now up and running in a 'normal way' (under Covid-19 restrictions) and nearly all of our children and families will continue to be seen face to face rather than virtually - in line with government guidance. As of November, 82% of Looked After Children have been visited (face to face) within timescales, 81% of children subject of a Child Protection Plan and 70% of children subject of a Child in Need Plan.

18. The increased numbers of contacts from our statutory partners to the C-SPA continued into November and has led to a 40% increase in referrals when compared to the same time last year. There are currently over 1,300 open assessments in social care teams, a slight reduction since September.

Support to vulnerable residents

Community Helpline

19. During the second national lockdown, the Community Helpline supported the outbound contact operation for CEV residents to check on their welfare. The latest number of CEV residents in Surrey is now just over 40,000. Following a prioritisation exercise, around 3,500 CEV residents have been contacted via an outbound call from their local district or borough council, and over an additional 25,000 CEV residents contacted by text with details of how to contact their local council if they needed support. The Community Helpline provided scripting and signposting information and directly supported two district & borough councils with inbound call capacity. Resulting call volume was less than 1%, suggesting that established provision and support is in place for CEV residents. However, a very small cohort of people were found to be in urgent need.

20. Demand for help and support through the Community Helpline remains low at present. Since the start of the pandemic, over 11,300 telephone enquiries from residents have been dealt with by the Helpline.

Improving communication with BAME residents

21. The CIA has highlighted there have been clear negative impacts for BAME groups during the pandemic, indicating communications to these groups were not as effective when compared to the wider population groups. We have started work with Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum (SMEF) and communication leads across Surrey to target

messages in a more appropriate way, for example holding focused zoom calls with the main BAME groups, engaging with community leaders and exploring a variety of channels to get messages out.

Covid-19 Finance update

22. On the 2 November the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) was updated to increase funding for all areas of the country to the high alert level of £8 per population head. This funding is in addition to the original £3.44m Test & Trace allocation and for Surrey totals £9,569,888. A plan is currently being drawn up as to how this fund will be spent.
23. Surrey is set to receive just over £2m funding as part of the Government's £170m Covid Winter Support Grant announced in November. The council will receive the first £1m of the funding in early December, with further allocations next year. It is designed to directly help families and individuals who have been hardest-hit by the pandemic.
24. This will support 17,000 children in the county eligible for Free School Meals to receive food vouchers throughout the Christmas holidays. There will also be a winter grant to care leavers, and direct support to families of younger children eligible for the pupil premium. Around £200,000 will be given to the Surrey Crisis Fund and made available to residents who are struggling through the winter.

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Recovery activity

25. The SLRF Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) continues to meet monthly to monitor recovery from Covid in Surrey across the themes of humanitarian, economic, infrastructure and environment, as well as considering specific actions that may need to be taken to 'restart' parts of our infrastructure and economy following the ending of Lockdown 2.0.
26. The Community Impact Assessment (CIA), which includes the Local Recovery Index has provided insight into the issues affecting our county and has highlighted worklessness, income poverty and mental health as areas for further discussion at the next RCG meeting in mid-December.
27. The first six months of 2021 are expected to be difficult for many people, with a number of residents already seeking support for the first time as a result of Covid. Data shows that Surrey's Claimant Count has more than tripled from January 2020 to the end of October 2020 with 18-24 year olds being the hardest hit. It is estimated that 16% of households in Surrey are classified as being in poverty compared to 21% nationally, with approximately 8.3% of children living in relative low-income families and 17,000 children receiving Free School Meals. Work is ongoing with partners within the DWP, Surrey CABs, Surrey Welfare Rights Unit and the Community Foundation for Surrey to look at the issue collectively and provide support and advice for residents who need it most.
28. The CIA also highlighted that many vulnerable groups experienced significant mental health impacts as a result of the pandemic driven by isolation, fear of infection, lack of knowledge about services and digital inequalities. In addition, a large number of residents who would not typically be considered as vulnerable, also experienced mental health impacts, with increased self-reported stress and anxiety most prevalent in residents aged 16-34. Again, partners across the system are working together to provide appropriate help and support to residents, much of which is highlighted on the Healthy Surrey website [Covid-19 support - Healthy Surrey](#).

29. In order to help people to support themselves and recognising that not all our residents have digital access, Surrey County Council's Communications Team have issued 'Surrey Together' to all Surrey households. This leaflet sets out a range of advice to help residents through the difficult winter period including details of help and support that is available to them as well as advice on being prepared, staying safe and useful contact numbers. These have been delivered to residents' doorsteps across the county from end of November.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

30. Risk implications are stated throughout the report and Covid-19 related risks are managed through the Strategic Coordination Group governance structure.

SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY

31. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook is uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded in the current year. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected from next year onward, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.
32. The financial implications of the pandemic continue to be monitored closely and reported regularly through the budget monitoring report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER

33. The various initiatives described in the report have been the subject of specific legal advice and support in formulating and implementing the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure they are in accordance with the Council's powers, duties and responsibilities. There are no further specific legal implications arising in the report.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

34. This report highlights the importance of a sustainable economic recovery and socio-economic inclusion. The CIA's findings and recommendations are an important source of insight and highlights the need to support residents from BAME communities by raising awareness of services and access. This will need to form a central part of the county's recovery following the pandemic.
35. Actions taken under the Surrey Local Outbreak Control Plan will have positive benefits for residents from protected groups. For example, work with schools and universities will ensure children, young people and their families will be supported in the event of an outbreak. The Care Homes Covid-19 Outbreak Oversight Group will also play a key role in supporting and protecting some of Surrey's older and disabled residents.
36. The report notes concern about our ability to place people upon discharge from hospital, which may have negative implications for some of our older residents who may need to stay in hospital for longer. The report notes the use of capacity in NHS Seacole Centre to mitigate this.

37. We have provided support to clinically extremely vulnerable residents through Adult Social Care and the Community Helpline. Though a small cohort compared to the wider population, most of them will have underlying health conditions that puts them at greater risk of severe illness or death, and our initiatives will have had a positive impact in establishing their support needs and enable us to help in different ways, from signposting to information to conducting a risk assessment with social care service users who fall into this category.
38. Some of the county's most vulnerable children and young people will receive financial support through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. Children on free school meals will be supported through the Christmas holidays. Care leavers and families of children eligible for the Pupil Premium will also be supported. It is noted £200,000 of the scheme will also be directed into supporting some of Surrey's most vulnerable residents.
39. The report highlights the need to target support at those residents who have been disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic. It acknowledges the need to support younger adults who may be more likely to lose their jobs and need to claim benefits, and the impacts on their mental health. It also draws attention to the work we are doing with partners to understand the impact of the pandemic on poverty across the county and the need to develop appropriate responses.
40. Residents from BAME communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic as highlighted by the CIA. The work with SMEF and other partners to support better targeted messaging will be a crucial mitigation against the worst effects of the pandemic, so they can seek support from the right services at the right time.
41. Supporting digitally excluded residents during this uncertain period will be crucial, particularly some older residents and those on lower incomes. The 'Surrey Together' leaflet is an important mitigation so they are not left behind this winter.

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Consulted:

Corporate Leadership Team and other staff