

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE: 23 FEBRUARY 2021****REPORT OF: MR TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****LEAD OFFICER: MICHAEL COUGHLIN, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE****SUBJECT: COVID-19: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL - UPDATE****ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: Growing A Sustainable Economy So Everyone Can Benefit/ Tackling Health Inequality/Empowering Communities****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

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

The pandemic continues to disproportionately impact communities across Surrey and responding to this effectively and helping communities to recover is critical to tackling health inequalities across the county.

As we move into the second month of the national lockdown, 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:

It is recommended that Cabinet note and endorse:

1. The latest public health situation with regard to Covid-19, nationally and in Surrey;
2. The actions being delivered through Surrey's Local Outbreak Control Plan, including the vaccination roll out, and the ongoing support to vulnerable residents, including through the council's Community Helpline and the Covid Winter Support Grant scheme;
3. The enacting and success of surge testing in two Surrey localities, with the support and co-operation of local residents;
4. The latest impacts on Adult Social Care and Children's, Families, Lifelong learning services;
5. Continued lobbying for prioritisation of key workers, including teachers, to have access to the vaccination programme as soon as possible;
6. The ongoing preparation for the local elections in May 2021 and associated risks;
7. The work and planning going on in respect of the transition into recovery from the pandemic;

8. The use of the council's Holiday Activities and Food Programme allocations in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The county and council continue to face unprecedented challenges due to the Covid-19 crisis. We are simultaneously managing response activity and work with our partners to enable recovery within the county, looking ahead to a return to day-to-day life for communities following the end of national lockdown.

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

DETAILS:

Public Health Update

National Lockdown

1. England's lockdown laws are due to end on 31 March 2021 and the government has committed to publishing a lockdown exit 'roadmap' on 22 February 2021, detailing plans for the gradual easing of restrictions. Guidance continues to be reviewed in anticipation of this announcement with full 'Stay at Home' guidance available [here](#).

Covid-19 Surveillance

2. Public Health continues to hold daily data surveillance meetings to ensure prompt action is taken in line with [Surrey's Local Outbreak Control Plan](#). The [Surrey Covid-19 Intelligence Summary](#) and [daily infographic](#) provide regular updates on Covid-19 alert levels. As of 8 February 2021, Surrey's rate per 100,000 is lower than the rate in England and comparable to the rate in the South East region.
3. [Surrey's Local Outbreak Control Plan](#) was updated on 27 January 2021 and continues to be reviewed to reflect the fluidity of the situation including any changes to national policy and guidance. The actions aligned to the plan that have recently taken place include:
 - **Surge testing:** [Surge testing](#), conducted under the auspices of Operation Eagle, commenced in a sub-post code area of Woking on 2 February 2021 following the identification of a specific variant of Covid-19 from two positive tests in the area, in residents who have no links to travel or previous variant cases. The variant is known as the SARS-CoV-2 variant which originated in South Africa. Working closely with Woking Borough Council, Surrey Police and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, test kits were distributed to 10,000 residents and with the support and co-operation of residents, more than 90%% of individuals contacted returned a test kit. The early success of the testing in Woking has helped inform surge testing in two areas of Runnymede - Egham and Thorpe – which began on 6 February 2021. With the support of Runnymede Borough Council and co-operation of residents, this operation replicated the one in Woking and achieved a 95% return rate for test kits.
 - **Targeted Community Testing (Asymptomatic Testing):** this is currently being rolled out across the county with the aim of identifying asymptomatic people who are Covid positive, with the priority to target essential workers in areas of highest infection rates. Public Health are working with the Department for Health and Social

Care (DHSC), as well as the Armed Forces, to put in place test sites which will operate initially for six weeks. The Staines Asymptomatic Test Sites (ATS) site is now operational in 'soft-launch' mode as well as supporting Operation Eagle volunteer testing. A soft launch of the Ewell site as well as staff training and operational readiness will take place, week commencing 8 February 2021. Woking will follow on from this, with these sites being made operational to the public from the week commencing 15 February 2021. Testing has also been progressed in Day Centres for Adult Social Care service users.

- **Local Contact Tracing:** From 10 February 2021, Surrey's Local Contact Tracing Service will be covering nine of the 11 districts and boroughs with a plan to extend delivery to cover the two remaining areas of Waverley and Mole Valley over the next few weeks. Between 28 January 2021 and 3 February 2021, the combined national and local contact tracing of cases across Surrey remained at 86% with the Local Contact Tracing service successfully completing 64% of cases that the national team were not able to contact within 24 hours.
- **Schools & Universities:** Schools and colleges will not return to full face-to-face education until 8 March at the earliest with plans for asymptomatic testing in school settings being developed in line with guidance from the DfE, the DHSC and advice from PHE. All Surrey's university settings continue to offer Lateral Flow Devices (LFD) testing to their students for the staggered return of priority student cohorts to campus in 2021.
- **Homeless Communities:** The temporary cabins allocated to those experiencing symptoms have been well used since they were introduced, with additional sites being considered through until June 2021. Colleagues providing care for the homeless are being included in the vaccination of local health and social care staff with initial planning taking place to ensure homeless persons in emergency accommodation can access the vaccine.
- **Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Communities:** Surrey's BAME Rapid Need Assessment highlights the importance of building trust through clear communication and meaningful engagement in order to maximise the uptake of health interventions and vaccinations. Key actions include the appointment of a health and race wellbeing officer with Surrey Minority & Ethnic Forum (SMEF) to facilitate community engagement with different subgroups of BAME communities to convey key health protection messages.
- **COVID Champions:** Progress continues to be made with launching this scheme across the county including Reigate & Banstead, Surrey Heath, Runnymede and Waverley. With Reigate & Banstead launching their first monthly online meeting with over 20 attendees, including the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder and Surrey Heath holding their first fortnightly online meeting with excellent engagement from across the community.

Vaccination Roll-out

4. As of 8 February 2021, the Surrey Heartlands Vaccination Programme has delivered approximately 200,000 vaccinations and is on track to have offered all those in Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority cohorts 1-4, a vaccination by 15 February 2021. Planning is now underway to vaccinate cohorts 5 onwards by the end of February 2021.

5. As of 5 February 2021, the Frimley Vaccination Programme has delivered over 100,000 doses of the vaccine across the Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care System (ICS). Coverage includes over 84% of those aged 75 to 79 years, and 91% of the population aged 80 years and over. All older people care homes across the Frimley Health and Care ICS have been vaccinated except a small number which have had Covid-19 outbreaks. Further rounds of vaccinations will be delivered over the coming weeks to capture those who were unable to be vaccinated due to infection or illness.
6. Adult Social Care have also been working with health partners to ensure front line adult and children's social care workers receive their vaccination. A communications campaign across to ensure that key messages reach those including supported living providers, home-based care agencies, learning disability care homes, to ensure access to vaccinations. As of 12 February, 10,315 eligible adult social care workers had been referred by the Council for a vaccination. This is a large part of the estimated 18,200 adult social care workforce in priority cohort 2. We know many providers have made their own arrangements to get their staff vaccinated with their local GP, vaccination centre etc, so the percentage of adult social care staff receiving a vaccination will be much higher than the Council's referral numbers indicate.
7. In January 2021, Surrey's Covid-19 Management Group (CMG) and Health Protection Operational Group merged to form one cohesive multi-agency forum for managing the tactical response to Covid-19 in Surrey. Risk Registers have been combined to reflect this change in governance.

The council's Covid-19 Ops Group

8. The Ops Group continues to meet weekly with a focus on supporting residents, communities, staff and contractors. Efforts have been concentrated on Operation Eagle with work undertaken to provide surge testing capacity in Woking and Egham including support in the early development of the surge testing programme, providing coordination support to ensure a quick roll out of test kits. We continue to engage in the roll out of surge testing in Egham.
9. The Ops Group also provided support to the Community Testing and Mass Vaccination programmes and from February onwards, the Ops Groups will monitor the number of vaccinations for members and staff on a weekly basis. Work continues with Public Health, HR and service leads to ensure that staff groups eligible for the vaccination, as per the prioritisation set by the JCVI, are provided the opportunity to receive the vaccination.
10. The Ops Group continue to support any redeployment requests from critical services with approximately 90% of requests received since the Autumn being matched with officer capacity from other services.

Impact on Adult Social Care (ASC) services

Hospital Discharges

11. As previously reported to Cabinet, teams continue to support the flow out of Surrey hospitals which has become more challenging with the higher level of positive cases in a rapidly changing and demanding environment.

Designated Settings

12. The agreed approach with Heartlands ICS and Frimley to manage acute flow and discharges through use of Community Hospital beds remains in place. The Government's introduction of an indemnity insurance scheme for providers last month is welcome, as the lack of clarity had resulted in few providers willing to actively work with Covid-19 positive referrals. Now community bed capacity can, where needed, be supplemented by NHS Trusts commissioning directly designated premises beds by ensuring that they maintain clinical oversight and provide, via the NHS, the indemnity cover providers have been so concerned about. Although this new arrangement has not been used by the council, it remains important as the planned scaling up of capacity at NHS Seacole Centre could not be delivered.
13. We continue to focus on discharges back to the community and people's homes with the right care and support. We have maintained additional community capacity to provide live in care and block arrangements for Home Based Care to ensure ongoing timely discharges from hospital.

Impact on Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Children's Social Care

14. Across frontline children's services, working arrangements remain largely the same with both frontline and support staff being asked to work in Covid-secure offices and the community where required to enable services to function effectively. Over the last month we have shifted to virtual visiting for one of our quadrants and only for children where it is safe to do so; these arrangements have been in place for three weeks and are reviewed weekly by the children's social care leadership team.
15. We continue to experience a higher-than-average number of contacts to the Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) and this is leading to high caseloads in our Assessment and Family Safeguarding teams. Despite these demand pressures, timeliness of assessments remains high and the vast majority of children subject of a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan continue to be seen face-to-face.
16. The number of children in care in Surrey has stabilised over the last two months at just over 1000; currently there are 1,012 children looked after by SCC (a small increase year-on-year). However, the number of children subject of Child Protection Plans continues to rise for the seventh consecutive month to 844 at the end of January; this compares with 648 at the same time last year – a 30% increase.

Education

17. The government announced that all schools would close as normal over the February half term. Early years settings are to remain open to provide childcare over the school holiday period for parents including those who are critical workers. We are working closely with our early years sector to introduce measures that will soften the financial impacts of Covid-19, recognising the importance of childcare provision in enabling parents to remain in work.
18. We are supporting schools and early years settings with the rollout of large-scale asymptomatic testing for their workforce including sourcing additional staff for testing pupils in anticipation of their return to school. Regular testing is an important tool for reducing the transmission of the virus and for enabling schools to open safely for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during the national lockdown.

19. We continue to put in a robust case to government for the prioritisation of all schools and early years staff for the Covid-19 vaccination, given their vital role in educating children.

Supporting Families

20. We recognise that food poverty is a key driver of health inequalities and we are continuing to ensure that disadvantaged children are fed during term time and in the school holidays. The Covid Winter Grant funding has been used to extend the provision of supermarket vouchers to children eligible for free school meals. The families of nearly 19,000 children and young people receiving free school meals or early years pupil premium were provided with a £15 supermarket voucher to purchase groceries over the half term week. We intend to do the same over the Easter holidays.
21. Schools continue to support families with children who are eligible for free school meals with either a voucher or a food parcel. For schools who choose food parcels through the provider Twelve15, we have assured ourselves that the quality and quantity of food provided is appropriate and that the value of what is available in the parcels is maximised. We know that what is provided through a food parcel scheme cannot be the same as what a parent would buy with £15, but we were confident that the boxes complied with government guidance, included good quality fresh fruits and vegetables as well as packaged items, and made it possible for children to enjoy variety in their daily diet.

Impact on Communities and Support to Vulnerable Residents

Community Helpline

22. The Community Helpline continues to provide a valuable service for residents in need complemented by an online offer on the council's website. As of February 2021, we have dealt with 13,584 calls from residents with a significant increase in call volumes following the announcement of surge testing in Woking and Egham. The Helpline received 236 calls the day after the announcement was made, mainly enquiries and questions from residents about localised testing. Information about surge testing is now available as part of the online offer on the council's website.
23. There are currently 41,214 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) residents on the latest Government Shielded list in Surrey with borough and districts continuing to make outbound calls to CEV residents who have registered for support on the National Shielding Service System (NSSS).
24. Between 200-300 new residents continue to be added to the Shielded Patient List (SPL) each week and we continue to send a text message to newly added patients ensuring they know how to access support if they need it.

Communications Response

25. The Multi Agency Information Group (MIG) continues to operate and lead the communications response to Covid-19 across the LRF and its partners including responding to the latest national behavioural insights to drive coordinated campaigns, maximising awareness of health messaging and compliance with national government guidelines. Examples of this include the use of digital advertising vans at countryside to reinforce 'stay local' messages and public health advice.

26. Additional communications working groups have been established on Vaccinations and Mental Health with relevant partners to ensure consistent, accurate and timely messages to support response and recovery efforts over the coming weeks and months.
27. We have led the recent communications planning and activity around the Surge Testing operations in Woking and Runnymede. This has helped forewarn residents, explain the reasoning and operational activity, update progress of the operations and thank residents for their cooperation. This work in Surrey has been used nationally to guide other local authority communications teams.

Recovery activity

28. The SLRF Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) continues to meet monthly, to plan and monitor recovery activity, with the February meeting considering the impacts of the vaccine roll out and the actions needed to help residents transition out of lockdown as quickly and as safely as possible.
29. Despite still responding to the pandemic, progress towards recovery will be closely monitored from the findings of [The Local Recovery Index](#) against the key cross cutting themes of economic recovery, financial poverty and mental health issues in children, young people and adults.
30. The RCG is in the process of capturing the positive changes to service delivery, processes, structures and systems that have been put in place as a result of dealing with the pandemic. This will be used to create a strategic document and action plan that will encourage the beneficial impacts of the response to be sustained, built on and further developed to become part of the 'new normal.'

Education

31. An update was given in the RCG regarding how schools are currently being supported including support for disadvantaged children, those with mental health issues and the wider work around child poverty. Also considered was new ways of teaching and how they can be used to build back better including a blended learning offer, the continued use of bubbles to ensure learning remains accessible for children with autism or anxiety to support the longer-term outcomes for young people.

Local economy

32. Work continues across the county with district and borough councils distributing grants to businesses who face financial hardship however many businesses are going further into debt each week they remain closed. To aid recovery, residents are being encouraged to support local businesses and plans are being put in place to help ensure customer confidence once the sector can reopen.
33. The RCG are also engaging with major employers, whose employees use high streets during the day, to understand what their offices will look like going forward and the potential longer-term impact this may have on the economy – many of them are currently looking at 40-60% office occupancy based on pre-pandemic occupation rates. As lockdown is eased, it is expected that there will be a progressive reopening of services such as leisure centres, gyms and community centres and opportunities to look at ways of increasing their income will be explored going forward.

Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS)

34. The VCFS is continuing to actively support with response activities such as the vaccination rollout and helping some of the most vulnerable people during the pandemic through foodbanks and befriending services. Whilst this has impacted the work on recovery, we continue to work with the sector to understand the impacts of Covid and offer support that leads to long term recovery and a robust and resilient sector.
35. For example, many staff and volunteers from charities involved in face to face health and social care work have been offered vaccinations. This is helping with restarting areas of work that had been paused, enabling steps to recovery of their organisations and more importantly the resuming the valuable services they deliver to support communities, such as Voluntary Car Schemes.

Covid-19 Finance update

Overall impact on budget

36. The impact of Covid-19 on the 2020/21 budget continues to be reported monthly in the Financial Update reports to Cabinet. At Month 6, Cabinet approved a budget reset to distribute Covid-19 emergency funding to meet directorate pressures and the costs of the Local Resilience Forum Cells. A total of £52.5m has been allocated; with £9.9m currently held in reserve. Against the £52.5m budget, at Month 9 a £3.6m deficit is forecast. This forecast will continually be reviewed throughout the remainder of the year. The 2020/21 Month 9 (December) Financial Report sets out further detail.

Specific Grants

37. We have continued to work diligently to ensure Adult Social Care (ASC) providers are effectively supported during the pandemic. In the past month this has involved action in relation to three grants:
 - **Infection Control Fund (ICF) round 2.** Final grant payments out of Surrey's total £15.8m ICF 2 funding have been made to care homes and community care providers compliant with the grant conditions and in line with the agreed distribution methodology that the Council developed closely with the Surrey Care Association. Combined with the previous distribution of Surrey's £17.2m Infection Control Fund round 1 grant, this has provided £35m of support to Surrey's ASC sector to manage infection control in ASC services as per the grant conditions.
 - **Rapid Testing Fund.** Surrey has received £4.7m to support ASC providers to deliver RFD testing in care homes across Surrey. All of this funding has been distributed to care homes compliant with the grant conditions based of the number of Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered beds in each home. This grant is for expenditure incurred in the period 2 December 2020 – 31 March 2021, and must be fully spent by 31 March 2021.
 - **ASC Workforce Fund.** The government has also announced a specific fund to help provide temporary additional resources to boost the Adult Social Care (ASC) workforce. Surrey's allocation is £2m and at the time of publication plans for the use of this grant were being finalised. However, it is likely that the Council will retain part of the grant to contribute towards its own additional ASC workforce

costs and then distribute the remainder to external ASC providers. This grant is for expenditure incurred in the period 16 January 2021 – 31 March 2021 and must be fully spent by 31 March 2021.

38. Taking the collective funding across these three grants together with over £10m of support, Surrey's ASC sector will have received over £50m of additional financial support in 2020/21 to help manage the financial impacts of the pandemic. This is on top of the costs of care packages that the council has continued to pay for including people assessed as eligible for ASC funded care provision and people discharged from hospitals during the pandemic.

Public Health Finance

39. The council's Public Health service continues to lead the response to the virus in Surrey. In doing so they are managing three grant funded programmes:
- Surrey's Test and Trace programme which is funded by a £3.4m grant.
 - The Contain Management Outbreak Fund (COMF). COMF is funding a range of initiatives delivered by the council and across district & borough councils to help manage and contain the spread of the virus. To date the Council has received £12.9m of funding covering the period 5th November - 29th December 2020. The government is yet to confirm funding arrangements from 30th December onwards.
 - The Targeted Community Testing (TCT) programme has commenced this month. The initial plan is to deliver this testing over a period of 8 weeks, and the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) has approved a £3.4m bid to fund the estimated costs of delivering testing in this period. Plans beyond the initial 8-week period will be reviewed based on the outcomes of the testing and the broader changes to the status of the pandemic in Surrey and nationally.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

40. This programme enables free holiday provision – including healthy food and enriching activities – for children on free school meals. It builds on a scheme the Government has funded since 2018 and is available for every local authority in England. We will use £2.1m from this scheme to support children and their families over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. £213,000 will be available for this current financial year, and £1.9m for 2021/22.

Local Elections

41. The Government have confirmed that the local elections scheduled for 6 May 2021 will go ahead and have issued a delivery plan intended to support the safe and effective management of the elections. Changes are to be made to nominations and proxy voting arrangements and additional government grants have been announced to contribute toward additional Covid-19 related costs.
42. Careful planning and preparation for the elections continue in conjunction with districts and boroughs, recognising that the prevalence of Covid-19 presents additional serious challenges and risks (in addition to those presented by multiple, multi-tier elections, including some Parishes, District and Borough Council, County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner) that will have an impact on costs, logistics and management of the elections. The timeframe for the roll-out of vaccinations and when the beneficial effects are expected to be felt fall close to the

election timetable. Ensuring residents' safety, welfare and reassurance in the conduct of the elections will be a priority, to ensure that people do not feel discouraged from taking part in the elections and/or disenfranchised.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

43. 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:

44. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2021/22 remains uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded. 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 in the medium term, 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.

45. The financial implications of the pandemic continue to be monitored closely and reported regularly through the budget monitoring report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER:

46. 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:

47. As in previous updates to Cabinet, this report highlights our continuing work to support some of Surrey's most vulnerable residents through this pandemic. This includes:
- Ongoing work to discharge older and disabled people from hospital into community or other settings;
 - Timeliness of assessments and visits to children and families being supported by children's services, in spite of increased demand;
 - Provision of supermarket vouchers through the Covid Winter Grant scheme to enable 19,000 children and young people on free school meals and their families to access healthy, fresh food; and,
 - Continued support for over 41,000 CEV residents who are registered on the NSSS.
48. The report highlights the impact of the pandemic on some of Surrey's most vulnerable children and young people. Good progress has been made in supporting them, such as through the supermarket voucher scheme, but the differences in experience of remote education, particularly for families with limited access to technology, families reliant on free school meals and increased demands on children's services means our services, and work with partners, need to be prepared

to support them longer term, which will have implications for recovery planning.

49. As we prepare for county council elections in May, we will work with partners to ensure some of our most vulnerable residents have options available to them to keep them safe while they participate in the democratic process. We will ensure all venues where residents will vote in person will follow Covid-secure guidelines and encourage uptake of postal voting for residents who may feel safer using this option, particularly those who are CEV.

Contact Officer:

Sarah Richardson, Head of Strategy, 07971 091475

Consulted: Corporate Leadership Team and other staff

This page is intentionally left blank