

# **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**20 August 2020**

## **Covid-19 Recovery**

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### Summary

This report provides Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the latest steps taken by the Council to assist Medway to begin recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Budget and Policy Framework
  - 1.1 Response to an emergency event is a matter for Cabinet. Scrutiny of that response is a matter for the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees. This Committee has the additional responsibility of providing guidance and leadership on the development and co-ordination of the scrutiny function for all of the O&S committees, including guidance on priorities for scrutiny activity.
2. Background
  - 2.1 The Council is a category one responder with legal responsibilities to play a significant role in any emergency event. The Covid-19 pandemic has required a multi-agency response and close liaison between central Government, local government and a variety of partners including through the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF).
  - 2.2 It is usual in an emergency for the planning of the recovery phase to start as soon as a major incident is declared. The work involved is kept separate to enable a focus on both streams of work independently. That is the approach the Council has used for the Covid1-9 pandemic in Medway. Unusually the response phase has continued after the start of the recovery phase. The Kent Resilience Forum Strategic Coordinating Group officially ended the response phase on 8 August, with a close eye being kept on infection levels (via the Local Outbreak Control Plan) in Medway and with the capacity to start the response phase quickly if needed.

- 2.3 The Cabinet has received regular updates of the activity being undertaken as part the response [June 2020](#) and [July 2020](#). Appended to this report (Appendix A) is the third report to Cabinet on 4 August, which focuses on the role the Council has played in recovery.
3. Covid 19 - Recovery Business Support activity
- 3.1 The teams in Business Support have played an active and significant role in the response and recovery phases of the pandemic. In the recovery phase to date the following activity has occurred.
- 3.3.1 A Governance Cell led by officers from predominantly Business Support teams have been ensuring that in the context of a dynamic event proper governance has taken place. Where urgent decisions have been needed, they have been taken by the Leader for decisions within Cabinet's delegation and by the Chief Executive for decisions within Council's delegation. These have then been reported to Cabinet and Council, in line with the Council's Constitution.
- 3.3.2 All of the services provided by teams in the Business Support Division have continued through the pandemic, with the majority of staff able to work from home. Service Managers have ensured that those arrangements have been appropriate and have completed service recovery plans and risk assessments to enable staff to make the views known.
- 3.3.3 The Capital Projects team have worked to enable the safe re-opening of buildings in line with Government guidance. This has involved a four stage process of advising safety measures needed, Medway Norse completing those works, Internal Audit checking that the works are completed in accordance with the advice and finally a formal sign off of the building as Covid-19 compliant for the use it is needed for.
- 3.3.4 The Human Resources team have worked to keep colleagues informed about the various employee relations issues linked to the pandemic. They have also provided support to Managers.
- 3.3.5 Senior Officers from Business Support have led and supported the Gold (Strategic), Silver (Tactical) and Bronze (Delivery) elements of the command structure that was put in place to manage the Council's work in the pandemic.
- 3.3.6 Finance colleagues have been active in ensuring the efficient and appropriate provision of various funding streams to Medway's businesses and other organisations.
- 3.3.7 The Business Change team have focussed on the ideas for getting "Back to Better" generated from across the Council. They have developed this work into themed areas and assisted in the Work Stream 2 of the recovery phase.
- 3.3.8 The Medway Task Force has continued its work specifically in Luton & Wayfield but in other parts of Medway throughout the pandemic and during the recovery phase.

## **4 Overview and Scrutiny's involvement**

- 4.1 At the last meeting of this Committee Members recommended that, beginning with the next round of meetings, all the O&S Committees should scrutinise the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic insofar as it relates to their remit.
- 4.2 The Children and Young People O&S Committee had already decided to scrutinise this matter and considered the first [report](#) at its meeting on 23 July. The Committee's recommendation will be discussed at the next Regeneration, Culture and Environment O&S Committee pre-agenda meeting. The Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee have recently received a report on Covid-19 support to care homes and, in addition, the last progress report from the Medway NHS Foundation Trust had a particular focus on the impact of Covid. Members agreed at the latest agenda planning meeting to continue with this approach in order to best manage the number of agenda items at meetings.

## **5 Risk management**

- 5.1 The approach adopted to managing risk is set out in paragraph 13 of the Cabinet report attached as Appendix A.

## **6. Financial and legal implications**

- 6.1 The financial and legal implications are set out in the Cabinet report attached as Appendix A – paragraphs 11 and 12.

## **7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 Members consider and scrutinise the Council's role in the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic

### **Lead officer contact**

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Appendices

Appendix A – Report to 4 August 2020 Cabinet

### **Background papers**

None