Staffordshire County Council

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Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 16 November 2021
10:00
Council Chamber

NB. The meeting will be webcast live which can be viewed here -
https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home

John Tradewell
Director of Corporate Services
8 November 2021

A G E N D A
PART ONE

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

3. **Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2021/22**   (Pages 1 - 38)

4. **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan**   (Pages 39 - 60)

5. **VCSE Capacity Building Recommission**   (Pages 61 - 94)

6. **Impact of Covid-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress - Update October 2021 and Way Forward**   (Pages 95 - 246)

7. **Work Programme**   (Pages 247 - 254)

8. **Exclusion of the Public**

   The Chairman to move:-

   "That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of Local Government Act 1972 indicated below".

PART TWO
(All reports in this section are exempt)

Membership

Note for Members of the Press and Public

Filming of Meetings

The Open (public) section of this meeting may be filmed for live or later broadcasting or other use, and, if you are at the meeting, you may be filmed, and are deemed to have agreed to being filmed and to the use of the recording for broadcast and/or other purposes.

Recording by Press and Public

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.

Scrutiny and Support Manager: Nicholas Pountney Tel: (01785) 276153

Staffordshire County Council

Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 16 November 2021

Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 2, 2021/22

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

a. Committee Members note and challenge performance and advise of any further information and/or action required.

Report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. This quarterly Integrated Performance Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan.

2. We recommend that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

Report

Background

3. The Integrated Performance report is considered by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

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![Staffordshire County Council logo]

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 October 2021

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2021/22

Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

"Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic remains our focus and we continue to do what is required to control the spread of the virus and keep people safe.

"COVID-19 is still very much with us and over Quarter 2 we have seen a steady increase in the number of cases. The impact that COVID-19 can have on lives and potentially on livelihoods is still very real. The vaccine has been a game changer and in Staffordshire 82% of adults have had both vaccines. Maximising vaccine uptake amongst those eligible, including booster doses and extending vaccine roll out to children aged 12 to 15, will all help to reduce the spread. As we approach autumn and then winter, we need to continue to keep people safe, keep the economy moving and reduce the pressures on our hospitals.

"We still face capacity issues and challenges in adult social care but in September, we had the long-awaited announcement from Government on how this will be funded. While many people will welcome the cap of £86,000 on people's contribution to their own care when they are elderly, the introduction of a 1.25% health and care levy on working people will be a difficult pill for many to swallow. In the short term the money will go into the NHS to clear the backlog of appointments and operations and will increase the county council's costs. So, we need to see more detail of how these proposals will work in practice.

"We will continue to support those who need us most, including the care sector and vulnerable families, children and communities. We continue to provide advice and support for businesses, as we work to get our economy back on track. We have plans in place to ensure we bounce back stronger and generate new opportunities for better jobs, improved lives, and a greener county for everyone."

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Cllr Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said,

"Coping with the COVID-19 pandemic continues to put extra pressures on our finances, but we continue to manage them effectively and are doing what is needed and spending what is required.

"We have used the extra funding and grants from Government to help support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services while protecting our residents. All council departments continue to deliver against their recovery priorities, whilst progressing with activities in the organisation's Delivery Plan.

"The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast saving of £1.992m (0.4%). This is compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £8.119m (1.5%) at Quarter 1.

"Like many local authorities, we still face financial challenges including in adult social care and in children's social services. We have had the announcement from Government on the long-term funding of adult social care, which was good to see, but we do need to see more details of how this will work in practice.

"We will continue to keep our finances in as strong a position as possible and to ensure that we provide good value for money for local tax-payers. Well managed finances also mean we can invest in our future and grow our economy post pandemic."

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Report Summary:

This quarterly Integrated Performance Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan.

Recommendation

We recommend that Cabinet:

b. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

c. Approve the use of up to £3.2m of the Exit and Transition Fund to support the cost of redundancies associated with the Children's Transformation programme.

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Cabinet – Wednesday 20 October 2021

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2021/22

Recommendation of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

We recommend that Cabinet:

a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

b. Approve the use of up to £3.2m of the Exit and Transition Fund to support the cost of redundancies associated with the Children's Transformation programme.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Background

4. All parts of Staffordshire County Council continue to deliver against key service priorities, whilst also progressing with the activities outlined in the organisation's Delivery Plan. This report provides an update on Quarter 2 activities for each service area: Health and Care; Families and Communities; Economy, Infrastructure and Skills; and Corporate Services.

5. **Summary**

6. At the end of Quarter 2 the overall assessment on the council's performance and financial position is AMBER. Although significant progress has been made across the organisation during the quarter, challenges remain in relation to capacity and demand across all service areas. There continue to be areas of financial risk in Adult Social Care and Families and Communities, with further details included within this report and its appendices. The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast saving of £1.992m (0.4%). This is compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £8.119m (1.5%) at Quarter 1.

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7. Health and Care

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Amber	Green

1. Significant progress has been made across Health and Care in Quarter 2, both in leading the council's response to COVID-19 and exiting lockdown plans, and in the recovery of key adult social care services. The AMBER delivery rating reflects considerable progress made to date, whilst continuing to manage some key challenges. Following the national trend, there continues to be high demand for adult social care assessments, leading to capacity issues, with work underway to understand and respond to this demand. The home care market is also experiencing rising demand, compounded by recruitment and retention challenges. The GREEN finance rating reflects significant in-year underspend, despite longer term cost pressures.

2. Demand and capacity continue to have been exacerbated by COVID-19, leaving more people needing extra support in their homes and more staff required to provide it. As the local economy has been re-opening, care providers have experienced an increase in staff turnover, which has led to some people having to wait longer for less urgent care packages. To tackle these issues, the council is maximising the effective use of available capacity, incentivising take-up of packages of care and working with care providers to support recruitment. Details of vacancies can be found at Nexxus or through the national portal.

3. In addition to existing recruitment and retention issues, COVID-19 has also permanently increased costs in social care due to requirements for enhanced infection prevention and control. These pressures have been met short term by non-recurrent funding from Government, but the council will need to continue to lobby for a sustainable longer-term settlement.

4. The care home market in Staffordshire will be reviewed to ensure the council can continue to offer quality care, value for money and timely access to care in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. A paper to the council's Cabinet has outlined the important role care homes have played throughout the pandemic, and the impact it has had on the care home market.

5. The number of COVID-19 cases in Staffordshire have continued to rise during Quarter 2, following national and regional trends. In the seven days to 7th October, 4,524 cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in

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Staffordshire, a rate of 512.2 per 100,000 population. This was higher than both the regional rate (414.0) and the national rate (355.3). Residents can keep up to date with the latest case figures in Staffordshire, including a district breakdown by clicking here.

6. During Quarter 2, the council has continued its response to COVID-19 through Local Outbreak Control activity, including:

    a. Management of COVID-19 incidents and outbreaks.
    b. Flexible and targeted testing facilities to support the asymptomatic testing model and the NHS vaccination programme. Staffordshire has made good progress with the vaccination programme with 87% of the adult population having received their first dose and nearly 82% having received two doses as at 17th September.
    c. The distribution of c.£1.5m of Infection Control Fund grant to 324 care services (as at 15th September 2021) to support providers to maintain enhanced infection control measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission in care settings.
    d. The distribution of c.£1m of Rapid Testing Fund grant to 198 care homes (as at 15th September 2021) to support providers to maintain ongoing testing arrangement for staff and residents.

7. Work is ongoing to deliver the council's Public Health & Prevention plan, with a focus on mitigating the ongoing public health risks from COVID-19. Recent activity includes a conference around mental health and physical activity by 'TogetherActive' to address mental health/suicide prevention in sports settings; exploring NHS Health Check options in the workplace; developing the latest Stoptober communications campaign that will run during September/October (including targeting businesses using LinkedIn); and engaging with Parish Councils to help tackle loneliness and isolation.

8. In Staffordshire there has been an increase in referrals to the National Diabetes Prevention Programme, despite a decline nationally. As a result, NHS England is promoting the Staffordshire model as good practice.

9. The council with partners has been working collaboratively since March to tackle the impact of the operations at Walleys Quarry. A Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) of Staffordshire Resilience Forum agencies has been established and they continue to work on a range of tasks including further preparations of forthcoming engagement events, scenario planning, communications work, and monitoring of the wider situation. The SCG partners have committed to holding two further public engagement events in October. Additional mental health support is also being offered to residents aged 16 and over who live or work near the

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site and are experiencing emotional distress owing to the odours from the site.

10. The next phase of the #TalkSuicide campaign was launched to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day on Friday 10th September. It aims to raise awareness of the issue and to make it easier for people to talk about it. Sadly 10 lives are lost to suicide each month across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, with the highest suicide rate in the area being men in their 40's and 50's. People can find out more about the campaign at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/talksuicide.

11. The extension of the Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential supplies scheme, in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust, has enabled a further 500 households to access emergency support with their energy bills. The learning taken from the Winter 2020 scheme will enable improved planning for the coming winter to further support families who may continue to struggle with the end of the furlough scheme.

12. The council was recognised by the National MJ Achievement Awards 2021 in September; with two finalists in the categories of Corporate Director of the Year and Public Health Improvement, for the Supportive Communities Programme. Dr Richard Harling, Director for Health and Care, was a finalist for Corporate Director of the Year for being a supportive and innovative leader and bringing people together to work in partnership to strengthen the council's pandemic response. The Supportive Communities team was a finalist for the programme's community-based approach to health and wellbeing, as well as its important role in supporting the response to the pandemic.

13. From a Finance perspective, the Health and Care forecasted outturn at Quarter 2 is a saving of £1.012m, compared to a £5m saving in Quarter 1. There remains a range of high risk Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings within this area, with the directorate seeking alternative savings where necessary. In addition, the level of client debt is above target and work is ongoing to recover this. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £4.367m.

14. **Families and Communities**

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Amber	Amber

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15. Significant progress has been made across the Families and Communities service area in Quarter 2. The overall AMBER performance ratings reflect much work that has taken place during the quarter, balanced with managing some key issues. Staffordshire has been experiencing a rise in children in care demand, as well as capacity challenges associated with the implementation of a large-scale children's system workforce structure to help tackle demand. In addition, increasing cost pressures within Children in Care and the SEND High Needs Block (Dedicated Schools Grant deficit) has potential to impact on the delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

16. The Children's Transformation programme is key to tackling the challenges of demand and capacity, particularly in relation to Children in our Care. Work to progress the transformation continues across the service, including the new district operating model set to go live in October 2021, supported by a new workforce structure and some streamlined pathways and processes. Work also continues on the SEND transformation with its first workstream, aimed at ensuring a more consistent approach to data, process and improvement, now underway. Phasing of further transformation is currently being planned in line with the recruitment of key vacant leadership roles.

17. At the 24th September 2021, there were 1,252 children in care in Staffordshire; which represents a reduction in September but an overall increase compared to the Quarter 1 position (1,245) and slightly higher than the revised business case number. The rate is 73.1 per 10,000 which is higher than the most recent national benchmark (67 per 10,000 – Nov 2020) but lower than regional (85.6 per 10,000 at end of June 2020).

18. At the 24th September 2021, the number of children subject of a child protection plan was 569 (33.4 per 10,000); which is a reduction compared to the Quarter 1 position (576) and remains below the most recent national and regional benchmarks. (National - 43 per 10,000 at the end of December 2020, Regional – 43.5 at the end of June 2020).

19. More detailed work is also being undertaken to better understand the children exiting care population in Staffordshire as part of the Newton project, which is a wider study that the council has been approached to be involved in as part of the county council network. Six local authorities are taking part, with findings helping the council to understand local context as well as national challenges and learning.

20. In Quarter 2, the council achieved successful outcomes for a further 309 families through the Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC)

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programme, which combined with the 316 successful outcomes achieved in Quarter 1 is already 76% of the annual target for 2021/22 (817) set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). If current performance is maintained the council is on track to exceed this target.

21. Families needing help will benefit from a county wide support network under new proposals. Cabinet agreed in September to build on its existing 'early years' delivery to support families with children aged up to 18 years old – or to 25 in the case of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The 'Family Hub' network will build upon existing children's centres and be based in the community to provide practical support. The proposals for the hub will go out to consultation later this year and will include joint working across different agencies and voluntary sector groups so that people only tell their story once.

22. All Staffordshire schools reopened following the summer break, with COVID-19 testing completed on site. The council will be supporting schools, young people, and parents, working with the local NHS to roll out the vaccinations for 12-15-year olds and minimise disruption for pupils. The vaccinations themselves will be delivered by the same nursing teams who carry out flu vaccinations in schools during the Autumn term.

23. Funding to create new school places and improve existing provision for children with SEND is being made available to Staffordshire schools. An additional £2.4 million has been made available by the Department for Education to support the council's five-year SEND strategy. Staffordshire currently has more than 6,300 children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). From January 2021 to September (17th) 2021, 84% of EHC plans have been issued in time in Staffordshire; this is above the most recent national average of 61%.

24. Many Afghan families who helped British Forces have been placed in short-term accommodation in Newcastle-under-Lyme by the Home Office, until they are offered permanent homes around the country. The council alongside other local public services and the NHS are supporting these families with health, education, and other needs, and have also been inundated with offers of support from the community. A JustGiving page has been set up in partnership with local charity the Community Foundation for Staffordshire, to take donations that will be used to buy clothes, children's toys, and other essential items.

25. The Trading Standards team continues to support businesses and the council through safeguarding and compliance advice. Between April and August 2021, the team has dealt with over 6,400 engagements and

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interventions with businesses; with over £320,000 prevented from being lost to scams and fraud through the council's intervention.

26. Work is ongoing to deliver the council's 2021/22 Communities Delivery Plan which aims to promote social action in local communities and to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector. The final quarter of Year 5 of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategic Capacity Building Partnership Contract (April – June 2021) saw 225 organisations provided with one to one development support, c.£3.7m external funding secured by VCSE organisations (c.£2.8m of this was for COVID-19 related projects and support) and 60 individuals supported to access local volunteering opportunities. A delivery plan for Year 6 (the final year) of the contract has also been developed and agreed with commissioners and providers.

27. In terms of the financial position at Quarter 2 for Families & Communities, there is a forecast overspend of £1.657m, an increase of £2.6m since Quarter 1, reflecting the rise in the number of Children in our Care and the need for placements. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £8.410m.

28. **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills**

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Green	Green

29. Economy, Infrastructure and Skills is currently on track in terms of both Delivery and Finance in Quarter 2. The overall GREEN performance ratings reflect considerable progress made across the service against its key plans, whilst continuing to respond to a number of ongoing challenges.

30. Work continues to bring day-to-day management and running of Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres back in-house. Governance arrangements are in place and a range of project plans are in development for key elements of the service. A Dynamic Purchasing System (procurement system for material off takers) and haulage tender (solution for haulage from operational take over) are both live. Residents will see no difference when the changeover happens in 2022, although there are plans to improve facilities and encourage more advanced recycling methods.

31. The council continues to support local businesses to survive, adapt and continue to operate as part of delivering its 5-year Staffordshire Means Back to Business Strategy. A key part is ensuring the right conditions for

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growth in Staffordshire's town centres, particularly as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Working in partnership with Stafford Borough Council, Cabinet has agreed to invest in the Stafford Future High Street Fund proposals which will regenerate parts of Stafford town centre as well as delivering improvements to the Market Square and other surrounding streets. This builds on the investment to create new enterprise space at the Shire Hall. The Eastgate Regeneration scheme is also moving forward. The demolition of the former Magistrate Court and Probation Services building will make way for longer term development and improve links between the Riverside retail development and the town centre.

32. Businesses across Staffordshire have continued to be supported by the council and its partners through a range of targeted initiatives, to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Some specific examples are included below.

33. The Countywide Redundancy Task Group, in partnership with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) and partners, continues to meet fortnightly providing support to businesses and residents impacted in relation to redundancies, as well as implementing the wider Plan for Jobs programmes such as Kickstart, Restart, and promoting Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs). To date the group has supported 1,926 individuals, with 35% moving into a positive outcome at the point of intervention.

34. Staffordshire Start-Up Loan scheme is assisting those made redundant or unemployed to start up new businesses with loans of between £3,000 and £5,000, with no interest or fees. As at 2nd September 2021, 10 start-up businesses supported through the scheme. Furthermore, the new Staffordshire Start-Up course (delivered through Staffordshire Chamber) is ongoing with 263 businesses signed up to the course by the 20th August.

35. As part of the £5m [Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme](), the council's Ignite Programme was launched earlier in the year; it is a programme of free advice, workshops, mentoring and support for post-16 further education students looking to set up their own business in Staffordshire. During Quarter 2 the Ignite business start-up session was delivered to 7,000 further education students.

36. Work continues to deliver the council's apprenticeship programme. The Staffordshire Apprenticeship 500 initiative began on 1st April 2021 and at the end of August had received 87 applications, resulting in a possible 147 apprenticeship starts.

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37. The latest out-of-work claimant figures have decreased to 3.8% of the working age population in August 2021, continuing the downward trend seen since February 2021. Whilst Staffordshire has previously been experiencing a rise in claimant numbers due to COVID-19, the county's position remains well below regional (6.3%) and national (5.3%) averages. The proportion of young claimants, aged 18-24, has increased from 3.7% in March 2020 to 5.7% in August 2021, with 'A Plan for Jobs 2020' initiatives such as the Kickstart Scheme being put in place to support Staffordshire's young people's employment prospects, to help prevent them becoming long-term unemployed.

38. Staffordshire's Economic Growth Programme, which began in 2014, has continued to create and safeguard jobs and enable house builds. As at end of July 2021, 10,421 jobs have been created/safeguarded and 4,076 new houses enabled.

39. In August, the 60-acre first phase of the i54 Western Extension was completed within the programmed period despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and poor weather. Progress has also been made with the Lichfield Southern Bypass (LSB) and Stafford Western Access Route (SWAR), with the former scheduled to open in October 2021 and the latter in November 2021.

40. Following recent changes to Government guidance, the council is currently reviewing its discretionary Temporary Vacant Seat Scheme, with a six-week public engagement exercise underway. This is set to run until midday on the 12th October 2021, with proposals being considered and a final decision to be taken after this date.

41. In September the council released its Climate Change Annual Report 2020/21 that described the steps it has taken to reduce its carbon emissions. The report highlights a significant 25% reduction in the council's carbon emissions in the first year since a climate change emergency had been declared. This has been achieved mainly by transferring all corporate council buildings, maintained schools, streetlights, and traffic signals to run on renewable energy.

42. Furthermore, the council also published its draft (2021-2025) Climate Change Action Plan which was reviewed by the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee and will be presented to Cabinet in October 2021. The document outlines how the council aims to continue to make progress towards the nationally set net zero target of 2050. The plan includes proposed actions such as increasing electric vehicle charging points across the county, improving the energy efficiency of all council owned buildings, looking into carbon offsetting options for areas such as disposal household waste, which are going to be impossible to eliminate.

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43. Working with the council's Active Travel Team, Heath Hayes Primary Academy in Cannock and St Edwards CofE Academy in Leek have both won the Regional School Travel Awards for their work promoting greener travel and combatting air pollution outside their schools. The awards are given to schools who have demonstrated excellence in supporting sustainable travel. Both schools are involved with the Staffordshire County Council's Air Aware Project to raise awareness of air pollution and to encourage less polluting and more sustainable journeys.

44. A successful 12-month trial to bring sustainable transport to Stafford and Newcastle-Under-Lyme through electric scooter hire came to an end in September. Since the trial started in September 2020, the council has been working with its transport partner Amey and electric scooter providers Ginger and Zwings to trial 200 micro mobility e-scooters in the towns, with over 40,000 rides taken across the county. The council and partners are now working together to bring an electric bike rental scheme to Staffordshire in the coming months.

45. The financial position at Quarter 2 for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills is a forecast saving of £0.367m, compared to a saving of £0.137m in Quarter 1, with small forecast savings across the service. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £2.033m.

46. **Corporate Services**

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Green	Green

47. Corporate Services is currently on track in terms of both Delivery and Finance in Quarter 2 and continues to provide vital support to the organisation in delivering on its priorities, as well as significant activity in support of Local Outbreak Control. Whilst the overall GREEN performance ratings reflect a great deal of activity that has taken place to progress its plans, like other service areas it continues to manage challenges regarding capacity to deliver some of its day to day work.

48. Over the next two years the council aims to raise £17m through the sale of unused land and buildings to fund transformation of services and activity, in line with new Government regulation. To date the council has delivered c.£7m in year through the sale of eight assets, including farms. In addition, all work on the council's priority property projects is progressing well and on track to deliver, including an additional c.£5million to support the school's maintenance programme. There does

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however remain procurement issues associated with many construction materials; an issue that is also being experienced nationally.

49. The Member's Fund for this year was launched at a Members event on June 24th. The fund is still linked to COVID-19; however, it now has a broader 'recovery' remit. The fund will focus on supporting community groups that are thinking about their future offer, who they work with, and how they fundraise / stay sustainable following COVID-19. As at 8th October, 84 applications for funding had been received for funding across Staffordshire.

50. Digital inclusion remains a key priority and work is continuing to address barriers to this in Staffordshire. More than 100 devices have been donated as part of 'Donate IT' Digital Device Recycling Scheme and these are now being distributed to people who are at risk of digital exclusion in the county.

51. Over the last quarter, work has continued on the roll out of the new Staffordshire story and place brand. This has included the launch of a dedicated ambassador portal within the "We Are Staffordshire" website, with almost 80 ambassadors now registered, and a partnership project with Staffordshire University Business School to engage young people in "We Are Staffordshire" key projects.

52. Work to deliver the council's internal People Strategy is ongoing. The council's new Employer Brand, aimed at attracting and retaining talented people in the council's workforce, is now live. Wellbeing of the workforce also remains a key priority, with the development of a new Wellbeing strategy agreed during Quarter 2 in preparation for implementation from October 2021.

53. An outcome of the COVID-19 response has been a significant reduction in sickness absence levels; currently 9.85 days (2.59 days short term, 7.26 days long term) lost per employee (August 2021), representing a reduction of 7.7% from the same period last year (2.74 days short term, 7.93 days long term). However, with the easing of lockdown, the council has seen a slight increase in absence levels. Absences relating to diagnosed/suspected cases of COVID-19 account for 1.19 days lost per employee over this period (12% of total), but this has been outweighed by improvements against most other absence reasons. Of note is the reduction in musculoskeletal absences, currently 1.57 days lost per employee, a reduction of 15% from last year.

54. In Corporate Services the financial position at Quarter 2 is a forecast saving of £0.9m, compared to a saving of £0.325m in Quarter 1. This is largely due to staffing vacancies and increased incomes. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £0.486m.

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Link to Strategic Plan

55. Cross-cutting as the performance of the Corporate Delivery Plan represents the most significant activity that directly delivers against all areas of the strategic plan.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

56. Detailed scrutiny of the council's activity in relation to the various areas discussed in this report takes place at the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as appropriate.

Community Impact

57. This report represents a strategic summary of the county council's performance against key indicators, finances and delivery of priorities. The individual projects and programmes are reported separately where specific decisions are required, and community impact assessments are completed where appropriate. As such there is no community impact presented with this report.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Finance Quarter 2 Summary
Appendix 2 - Finance Quarter 2 Detailed Report
Appendix 3 - Corporate Checklist
Appendix 4 - Revenue Forecast Outturn 2021/22
Appendix 5 - Capital Forecast Outturn 2021/22
Appendix 6 - Financial Health Indicators 2021/22

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Latest Financial Summary

The following graphs summarise the financial performance of the council. Full details are contained in this report.

The graphs and charts are compiled using quarter 2 forecast information.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a saving of £2.0m (0.4%). Due to Covid 19 Central Government have issued additional grant payments to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services while protecting the workforce and local residents.

There has been request for the use of £0.310m of the Exit and Transition Fund which was established in 2018/19.
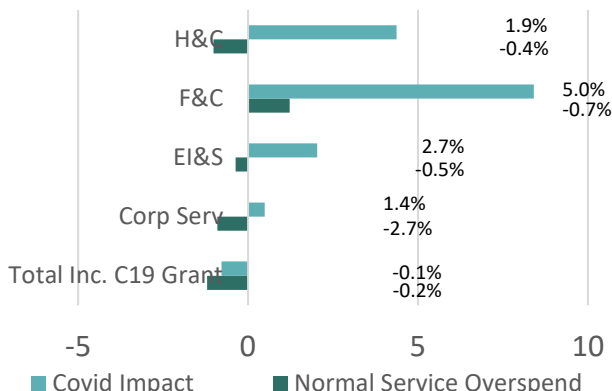
There is a forecast non-Covid saving of £14m on Care Commissioning Older People Placements budgets. The reduced number of placements has lead to this forecast – it does also mean that it is possible the forecast income may not be achieved and this will be monitored throughout the financial year.

Savings are categorised into confidence of delivery. There are £1.625m savings that are delivered as at quarter 2. There are £1.284m savings classes as Low confidence and some of those savings are £1.204m of Adult Social Care Client Income savings and £50,000 for Care Commissioning Single Management Team.

The latest capital outturn projection is £129.5m, compared to the quarter 1 position of £126.7m, an increase of 2.3%. This projection is a fully funded position. This increase is due to additional developer contributions and basic needs funding for two new build schools, offset by reductions across the capital programme. More details can be found in the report.
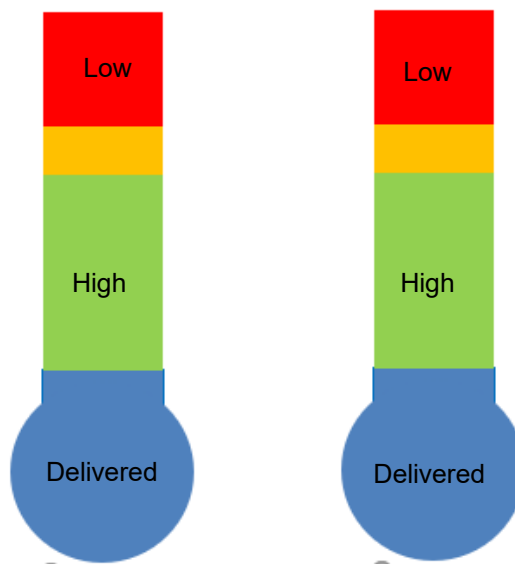
Within the national context, the retail price index is currently 4.8%, and the latest consumer price index is 3.2%. GDP is estimated to have decreased by 1.1% in the three months to June 2021, but has increased by 0.1% in July 2021. Current unemployment figures show Staffordshire benefit claimant rate remains below that of the West Midlands and Great Britain.
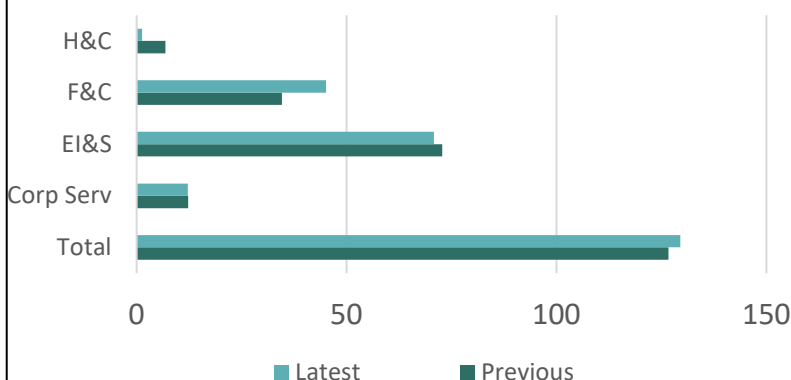
Revenue Budget Variance

Category		
H&C	1.9%	-0.4%
F&C	5.0%	-0.7%
EI&S	2.7%	-0.5%
Corp Serv	1.4%	-2.7%
Total Inc. C19 Grant	-0.1%	-0.2%

■ Covid Impact   ■ Normal Service Overspend

Savings Tracker – Target £5.682m

Quarter 1 - £5.682m   Quarter 2 - £5.682m

(Low / High / Delivered)

Capital Programme

(H&C, F&C, EI&S, Corp Serv, Total)

■ Latest   ■ Previous

Introduction

Revenue Forecast

1.   The latest revenue forecast outturn (as provided in appendix 4) shows a forecast saving of £1.992m (0.4%). This is compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £8.119m (1.5%) at quarter 1.

2.   Since 2020/21, Covid 19 has been a global pandemic requiring a combined response from public sector services, which is also having a severe impact on the economy. In 2021/22 Central Government has issued general grant to local authorities, totalling £16.2m, in order to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services during the pandemic while protecting both workforce and local residents.

3.   The table below sets out the current forecast of additional costs relating to the pandemic, plus lost income and delayed savings caused by the crisis.

	£m
Additional Costs	4.237
Lost income	1.936
Delayed savings	9.046
Grant funding	(16.204)
Remaining Grant / (Shortfall)	0.985

All grants received by Staffordshire County Council in 2021/22 for Covid 19 related activities are listed below. The General Covid Grant can fund activity in all service areas, the remaining grants are specific and go directly to services. All grants allocated for Covid-related activities will be utilised in full, over the medium term, in order to fund the additional expenditure caused by the pandemic.

	£m
General Covid Grant Funding	16.204
Adult Social Care Lateral Flow Testing	3.713
Adult Social Care Infection Control	5.346
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	1.477
Local Support Grant	0.523
Practical Support Framework	0.681

Covid Winter Grant	0.678
Contain Outbreak Management	4.182
Total	**32.804**

4.   The following paragraphs consider the key financial issues in each of the council's portfolios.

5.   **Health and Care**   **Covid impact - £4.367m**
                                   Normal service forecast – £1.012m saving

6.   *Adults Social Care & Safeguarding*   *Covid impact - £0.240m*
                                   Normal service forecast – £0.102m saving

7.   Overall, the service is forecast to save £0.102m. Covid related costs are forecast to be £0.240m.

8.   There are currently a number of vacancies in the Adult Learning Disability Team (ALDT) which have proven difficult to fill. This has led to a forecast saving of £0.521m. A review of the ratio of qualified to unqualified staff is planned which could lead to higher costs in the future. Agency staff may also be required to maintain service delivery during the year.

9.   Section 75 agreements for both Mental Health North and South are now in place and it is forecast that the costs will be in line with the budget. It is also forecast that the £0.154m MTFS saving for Mental Health North will be delivered in full.

10. There is a forecast saving of £0.560m in the Learning Disability In-house Residential services due to staff vacancies in the first half of the year. There is also a forecast saving of £0.125m for the Specialised Day Opportunity Service due to some transport savings and some additional cross boundary income. Reviews of these services are taking place which may lead to changes to the way they operate and will have a financial impact in the future.

11. Cabinet have previously agreed capital investment in Douglas Road and Hawthorn House sites, with the financial analysis demonstrating a positive benefit for the council. Unfortunately, building costs are increasing as a result of a global shortage of materials due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It is therefore

proposed to allocate £2m to the capital cost of these schemes. This will also minimise future borrowing costs for the council.

12.   There is a forecast overspend of £1.130m for care systems. This is because the service has repaid in full all future years' borrowing repayments for the care system, which will save £0.539m in future years.

13.   There are other small variances totalling a forecast saving of £26,000.

14.   *Care Commissioning*   *Covid impact - £4.127m*
                                    Normal service forecast – £0.910m saving

15.   Overall the service has a forecast saving of £0.910m, and Covid related costs are forecast to be £4.127m. There is an assumption that any additional costs related to the pandemic will be met from the Covid-19 funding allocations received by the Council.

16.   The Older Peoples placement budget is now forecast to save £14.951m compared to the £5m reported at quarter 1.

17.   The number of people in residential and nursing placement is significantly lower than had been budgeted for in the MTFS as a direct result of the Coronavirus pandemic. This is despite increases during the first quarter as the final reviews have been completed for those clients discharged from hospital under pathway 3. However, the overall number of service packages resulting from pathway 3 haven't materialised, thereby compounding the reduction in overall placement numbers. This has resulted in a total of 290 fewer placements than in the budget as at the end of July 2021 and a forecast saving of £11.042m. The Older Peoples placement budget includes £7m additional budget that was provided in the MTFS to mitigate risks in the care market. Given current numbers and future forecasts on the number of starters and levers, it appears as though this will not be required in 2021/22.

18.   The reduced number of placements has resulted in a forecast £2.829m income shortfall from residential and nursing client contributions compared to the budget. This means that it is most unlikely that the service will achieve the additional growth in income that we had budgeted in year.

19.   There is a forecast saving of £0.923m on Older Peoples Home Care budget. Analysis of the dynamic home care data shows that the number of hours provided has remained relatively stable recently, however there is a forecast of increased demand, so it is possible that this saving may reduce as we move through the financial year.

20.   There is a forecast saving of £0.186m on the Older Peoples Direct Payments budget, which was adjusted to reflect the ongoing reduction of people in receipt of a direct payment since April 2019.

21.   The Older People's Day Care budget is forecast to save £0.413m because of lower activity due to the pandemic.

22.   The Older People's In-House Residential budget is forecast to save £0.216m, but future demand is still uncertain so this position may change later in the year.

23.   There is a forecast saving of £0.469m on the Older People's Short Stay Respite budget, again due to lower activity due to the pandemic.

24.   The Mental Health budget was increased this year in recognition of the growth in placement costs during 2020/21. The service is forecast to overspend by £0.263m largely due to a forecast overspend on the placement budget of £0.339m because of an increased costs of direct payments and homecare. This has been partially offset by a small forecast saving on Mental Health contracts of £76,000. It is forecast that the £0.2m Mental Health contract MTFS saving will be delivered in full. There remains a risk of further increases in Mental Health referrals due to the impact of the pandemic.

25.   The Learning Disability placement budget is forecast to save £2.882m. This saving is due to reductions in the number of people with learning disabilities being cared for in nursing homes as well as savings on homecare, direct payments and replacement residential care (respite care). Residential and supported living costs are slightly above budget. We are seeing the full benefit of increases in health income negotiated in recent years. There is a continued risk that the Community Offer and Reviews Programme MTFS savings will not be delivered in full. This forecast is based on the assumption that other smaller MTFS savings will be achieved in full. It is also assumed that any additional unplanned care costs resulting from the pandemic will be met from additional

grant funding. There remains a risk that demographic growth and care price increases could exceed the budget forecasts, but these will be monitored as we move through the year.

26.   The council will continue to work with the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to support the discharge of people with learning disabilities or autism from specialist hospitals to community-based setting under the Transforming Care Partnership (TCP). Because the National Health Service England (NHSE) reduced the amount of funding that accompanied each individual, there has been a substantial cost pressure for the Staffordshire Health and Care economy. It is expected that there will be a further grant allocation from the government to support future discharges, but this has not yet been confirmed. There remains a risk of further cost pressures in 2021/22 as a result of this programme. The latest forecast is that the county council could incur an overspend of over £4m this year. The council is working with its health partners to try and agree a new cost allocation model. However, there still remains a risk of further costs pressures for the remainder of the MTFS period.

27.   The new Carers service went live in April 2021 following a delay caused by the pandemic. It is forecast that there will be a small saving of £15,000 in year. There is also a saving forecast on the Advocacy contract of £77,000 and it is expected that the £0.150m contract saving will be delivered in full.

28.   Following the resolution of a contract dispute on the Section 75 Contract with the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) there is now a small forecast saving on the Reablement contract of £80,000. However, the final inflation uplifts on the MPFT Section 75 have not yet been agreed. There is therefore a risk that these uplifts could exceed the assumptions built into the budget.

29.   There is a forecast saving of £0.116m for the Learning Disability and Mental Health Commissioning Team due to staff vacancies held in the first half of the year.

30.   Prisoners related care activities are forecast to save £0.263m due to staffing savings and lower care costs.
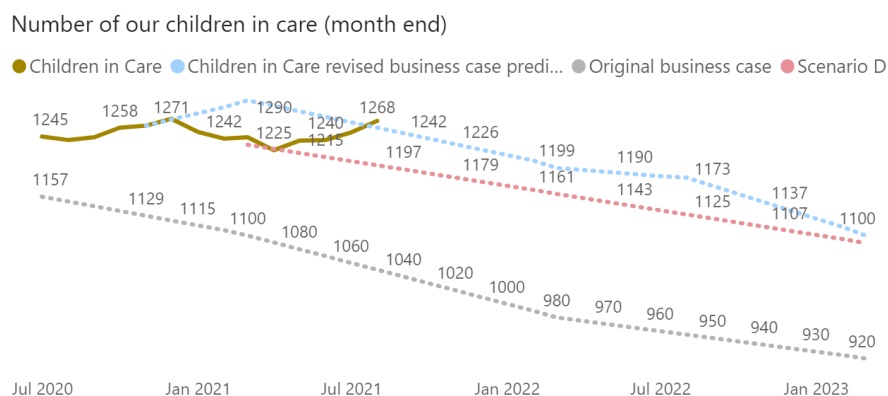
31.   The Physical Disabilities Placement budget is forecast to save £0.649m, mainly as a result of fewer people in residential and nursing placements. There are also savings on homecare, direct payments and supported housing. These savings have been offset by some small overspends and a forecast shortfall in income.

32.   Other variances total a forecast saving of £0.140m.

33.   Forecasting future numbers and price pressures under current circumstances is extremely difficult, so we will continue to monitor the position closely throughout the remainder of the financial year. In addition, we are currently seeing unprecedented demand for assessments. There is a significant risk that this will translate into higher numbers of people in care through 2021/22 and it is therefore possible that the current forecast saving will reduce. Furthermore, there are significant recruitment and retention issues in the care market as the sector competes with other areas of the economy that have now reopened, such as retail and hospitality, to fill vacancies. This can ultimately have a knock-on effect to the council as providers are not able to take on new packages due to staff shortages. This scarcity will most likely result in prices being driven up. To mitigate this risk, it is proposed that a £7m contribution is made to the care risk reserve.

34.   Staffordshire County Council wants to improve its internal systems and the wider digital offer to its residents and partners. This can enhance the working environment for colleagues, improve internal processes, reduce costs, and provide new data insights. In addition, technology and new data insights can be used to develop relationships with our communities, enabling and encouraging more residents to help themselves and each other. It is therefore proposed that a £7m contribution is made to the IT reserve to enable this digital transformation.

35.   There is a risk that the council will not be able to recover outstanding debt through courts due to the backlog arising from the pandemic. In addition, the Legal Team are working through some historic, complex cases and it is possible that the council will not recover all outstanding sums. It is therefore proposed that the Health & Care bad debt provision is increased by £2m.

36.   The council has been allocated a further £3.903m in 2021/22 for Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund ring fenced grant. The guidance

identified a proportion of the funding be passported directly to care homes, drug and alcohol settings and community providers with the remainder to be allocated at the council's discretion. A report was submitted to SLT setting out proposals to allocate and spend the funding in line with the grant conditions. Funding needs to be passported to providers or spent by 30 September 2021, with any unspent allocation to be returned to the Department of Health and Social Care.

37. The additional Covid related costs of £4.367m consists of; £2.646m unachievable savings that have been reprofiled to future years, £0.530m additional staffing costs that have been incurred to support the ongoing response to the pandemic and ensure continuity of services, £0.6m additional expenditure to support the provider market such as providing a care home loan scheme, and £0.591m of other exception costs.

38. **Families & Communities**   **Covid impact - £8.410m**
                    Normal service forecast - £1.225m overspend

39. *Children's Services*   *Covid impact - £7.766m*
                    Normal service forecast - £1.657m overspend

40. The forecast overspend of £1.657m is £2.6m higher than the forecast saving reported at quarter 1 and reflects the rises in the number of Children in our Care and the need for placements.

41. The forecast overspend includes £1.4m within Children in our Care, including £2.4m in the placement budget partially offset by additional grant for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and staff vacancies, as well and a forecast overspend in the Independent Conference Chair service of £0.3m due to additional staffing levels.

42. This surge in demand is reflected across the region – and similarly across the country – and has put inevitable pressure on supply. This has been exacerbated by carers and workers needing to self-isolate. Alongside the increased numbers, there has also been an increase in the unit costs, partly due to some complex children being placed and partly due to limited capacity.

43. The recent rise in demand is a concern and, with numbers now exceeding the revised business case assumptions, could put at risk the delivery of planned MTFS savings.

Number of our children in care (month end)

●Children in Care ●Children in Care revised business case predi... ●Original business case ●Scenario D


44. Short term, we are monitoring closely children entering care and those which are leaving and due to leave. This should aid more accurate predictions. A medium term action plan has been developed to unblock hurdles in the leaving care process by speaking directly with front line practitioners, national benchmarking as well as understanding the uptake of Family Group Conferencing.

45. Due to Covid 19, planned transformation works and savings of £6.4m impacting across Children's Services have seen delays, and have been reprofiled within the MTFS accordingly.

46. Transformation

47. The Families and Communities Directorate is currently working through the final stages of its transformation programme in readiness for a targeted implementation date of 25 October 2021.

48. The redesign, which is informed by best practice, seeks to change both the practice and culture across the children's system and it has impacted upon just over 2,000 staff. It will enable a whole system approach, bringing together children's social care, SEND and Inclusion, the Place Based Approach and commissioning. It is essential for the delivery of revised practices / cultures that underpin the necessary MTFS savings and stabilisation of SEND.

49. Significantly, and whilst some redundancies were anticipated, the number and cost was difficult to assess when the business case was initially approved.

50. As a result of these processes, the latest expectation is that 31 staff will be made redundant at a cost of c £2.8m. To reduce and mitigate the impact of redundancy, the restructuring of roles and people to align to the new operating model the process has been managed in accordance with the Council's 'Staffing Protocol' policies.

51. This reflects the latest position only and remains fluid while the recruitment process continues throughout September/October. Based on the latest position, a further 14 staff are currently 'going through the process' and remain at risk over and above those staff identified above and – in a worst case scenario – this could see the total number of staff redundancies increase to 45 and a cost of c £3.2m. The proposal is that this additional cost of redundancy is recognised and funded from the Exit and Transition Fund.

52. *Education Services*   *Covid impact - £0.417m*
Normal service forecast - £0.264m saving

53. The forecast saving is a result of budget savings in historical pension liabilities an additional income in areas such as schools' admissions.

54. SEND transport is currently forecast to be breakeven due to additional resource that was allocated to the service this year. However there remains a risk that contract retendering due later in the year that could lead to further pressures in this area.

55. There are Covid costs relating to SEN transport cleaning.

56. *SEND High Needs Block*

57. The High Needs Block is currently forecast to overspend by £7.5m and reflects continuing growing demand for SEND support. This overspend will be charged against the DSG reserve which, at the end of 2020/21 was already £2m in deficit. Staffordshire County Council is not alone in this difficult financial predicament, in fact it is a position shared by the majority of councils across the sector.

No. EHCP & Statements
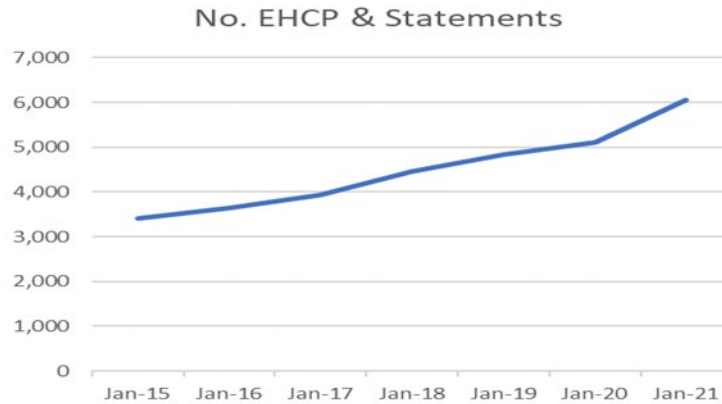
58. It is forecast that the SEND transformation programme, with the full roll out of the district hub model, will provide a more inclusive system that enables the necessary early support and intervention to manage demand within overall resources. However, this will take time and will not generate the immediate savings required to address the current shortfall.

59. Given the latest forecast overspend, the deficit is likely to increase this year and in future years until such time that the SEND transformation plan can impact:
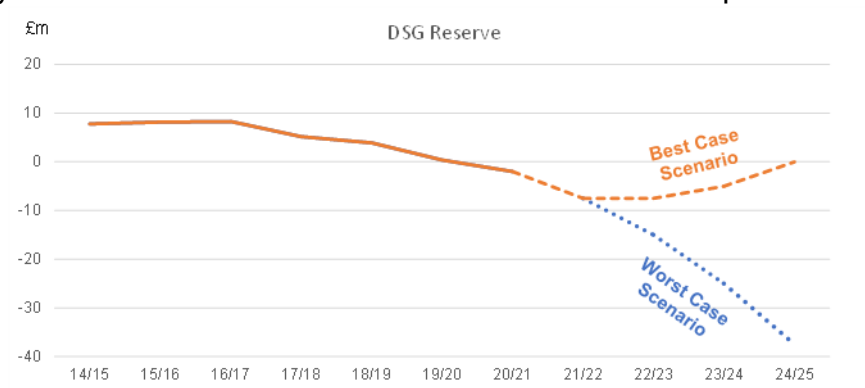
60. Schools Forum, at is meeting in October 2020, approved a deficit management plan utilising surplus Growth Fund money that will be transferred to the DSG reserve. It is estimated that, for 2021/22, this will be around £1m - £1.5m, but given the worsening financial position outline above further action will be required.

61. The council has currently outline in consultation with all maintained and academy schools' proposals for a 0.5% funding switch in 2022/23 – equivalent to £3m – from the school's block to support high needs as permitted within DfE guidance. This will be considered by Schools Forum at its meeting in October 2021.

62. *Culture & Communities*   *Covid impact - £0.135m*
Normal service forecast - £21,000 saving

63. This forecast saving is largely due to reduced transports costs. Covid 19 has led to reduced income for the service from reduced trading activity.

64. *Rural County*   *Covid impact - £92,000*
Normal service forecast - £92,000 saving

65. The forecast saving largely due to one off staffing vacancies of £0.3m held pending the re-organisation of the service, to be carried out in the final quarter of the financial year, partially offset by increased costs of £0.2m for Rights of Way and Carpark repairs due to increased usage.

66. The pandemic has led to loss of income for the service from reduced trading activity, parking and penalty fines.

67. *Community Safety*   *Covid impact – nil*
Normal service forecast - £55,000 saving

68. The forecast saving is due to service contract savings which have resulted from the impact of Covid 19 are likely to return to normal levels for the remainder of the financial year.

69. **Economy, Infrastructure & Skills**   **Covid impact - £2.033m**
Normal service forecast - £0.367m saving

70. *Business & Enterprise*   *Covid impact - nil*
Normal service forecast – breakeven

71. The service is forecast to breakeven, however there are forecast overspends against the Magistrates Court holding costs and planning application fee income. These overspends are off set by additional grant income from Growth Hub activities, forecast surpluses on Enterprise Centres, and a vacancy within the Economic Growth team.

72.   *Infrastructure & Highways*   *Covid impact - £0.310m*
                                                              Normal service forecast – breakeven

73.   The forecast for the service is breakeven, which is no change from quarter 1.

74.   There are various forecast overspends in a number of areas including Sustainable Development and Highways Maintenance, but these are being managed by forecast savings within the Community Infrastructure and then Network Management areas. These variances will be continually reviewed as we move through the financial year. The forecast position also includes transferring £0.590m of additional permit income to reserves as the estimated over recovery for this year.

75.   The expected impact of the pandemic is forecast to be £0.310m, which is largely a continued loss of income for street parking and bus enforcement in the Regulation and Governance area, and a small number of increased costs for Safe Operating Procedures such as PPE.

76.   *Transport, Connectivity & Waste*   *Covid impact - £1.723m*
                                                              Normal service forecast - £0.277m saving

77.   The Transport and Connectivity area is forecast overspend by £0.154m, this includes savings within the operational Transport budgets which are offset by making a provision of £0.6m for the remaining three years of the Local Transport Assessment Works.

78.   Extra Covid 19 costs include providing additional cleaning on home to school transport until the end of July and additional transport capacity to avoid full and standing buses at peak times.

79.   The Sustainability and Waste area is forecast to save £0.430m, which assumes the MTFS Green Waste recycling credits saving of £0.5m will be achieved. This forecast saving also includes a provision for likely additional costs relating to the Household Waste Recycling Centre mobilisation project of £0.2m and consultants working on the Hanford incinerator project of £0.2m. It should be noted that waste budgets are demand led and will need continued close monitoring throughout the year to track tonnages and cost as social restrictions are eased and any 'new normal' is established. The outturn position for the HWRC budget is also being closely monitored as there is an emerging risk of

higher than anticipated costs in this area. If required this will be reflected in the next quarterly reporting.

80. There is a forecast of £1.160m for the impact of Covid 19 on Waste. This is an increase of £0.630m from quarter 1, and is due to the cost of additional tonnages which have been seen since March 2020 as a result of the change in working habits but also the loss of third party income to the Energy from Waste sites as a result of this increased tonnage. This forecast is going to be reviewed in depth ahead of quarter 3 as there is still uncertainty around the impact of Covid 19 within these budget areas, and there is a risk that this may be a longer-term issue which would put the wider Waste budget and current MTFS under more pressure.

81. *Skills*   *Covid impact – nil*
Normal service forecast - £90,000 saving

82. The service is forecast to save £90,000 which is due to vacancies within the team, there is also a small forecast saving on Community Learning Groups.

83. **Corporate Services**   **Covid impact - £0.486m**
Normal service forecast - £0.9m saving

84. The service is forecast to save £0.9m, this includes a forecast savings within Assets, Business Support and Strategy due to staff vacancies, and additional income within Registrars due to the higher number of weddings now being booked as social restrictions are lifted. These savings are partially offset by a forecast overspend within HR which is the non-delivery of MTFS savings.

85. There are forecast to be £0.486m Covid 19 related costs, which includes costs of temporary mortuary facilities extension and the closures of the first annual leave purchase scheme window.

86. **Centrally Controlled**

87. The business as usual saving of £0.150m is within Pooled Buildings and relates to savings on energy and electricity costs.

88.   The Covid 19 related costs include forecast loss of rental income and potential additional costs to modify the office space in SP1 post Covid 19.

89.   The Insurance budget is £3.633m and this covers all types of insurance required such as Property and Liability. The type of insurance with the largest cost is the liability insurance which covers both public and employer liability, officials and professional indemnity insurance. This policy is going out to tender shortly, in order to obtain an insurer for a policy start date of 1st May 2022. Therefore there is a risk that the cost of insurance increases.

90.   The pay award for 2021/22 is currently under negotiation but has not yet been agreed. The MTFS for the current year assumed 0% increase for pay, following the Spending Review in November 2020 which announced a pay freeze for the public sector. Any pay award for the current year would therefore need to be funded from the Contingency budget.

91.   When the MTFS was produced, it assumed 1% for non-pay inflation would be incurred during 2021/22. Current rates of inflation are higher than this and in addition, further monies are required to replenish the Exit and Transition Fund which is being used this year to fund the Children's Transformation programme. In light of this, it would be prudent to use any underspend in this current year to increase the Exit and Transition Fund.

92.   **Capital Forecast**

93.   Appendix 5 compares the latest capital forecast outturn of £129.5m, an increase from the quarter 1 position of £126.7m. The key reasons for this increase of £2.7m are set out in the following paragraphs.

94.   **Health and Care**   **Forecast spend £1.343m**

95.   There has been a decrease of £5.780m since the quarter 1 report. This is due to the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic which has resulted in uncertainty over demand and capacity requirements moving forward, therefore current plans are on hold for new build nursing homes at Histon Hill and Rowley Hall with complete budgets rephased to 2022/23 and 2023/24.

96.   **Families and Communities**   **Forecast spend £45.122m**

97.   Maintained Schools   *Forecast Spend £44.307m*

98.   There has been an increase of £4.155m since quarter 1 due to two new schools builds being introduced into the programme – Parks Farm of £2.7m and Fradley Park Primary of £2.2m. These schemes are primary funded from developer contributions and additional basic needs. These increases are offset by various budget refinements across the rest of the programme of £0.725m.

99.   There has been a £6.410m increase due to a number of new smaller schemes being added to the programme, funded from a mix of school contributions, Third Party contributions and additional government School Condition Allocation grant that will be used to further address condition priorities in schools.

100.   **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills**   **Forecast spend £70.825m**

101.   Economic Planning & Future Prosperity   *Forecast spend £11.198m*

102.   There has been a decrease of £0.571m since quarter one, this is due to reduction in i54 Western Extension as we approach the end of the project and risk and contingency budgets are reduced by £0.668m, this is partially offset by minor budget refinements including Redhill, Eastgate Regeneration and others totalling £97,000.

103.   It if forecast that £0.3m will be spent from the Farms Investment Fund. This includes a pilot County Farm Small Grant Scheme of up to £0.1m and an investment of £0.120m to make improvements at one of the holdings on the Woodhouse Estate, providing a modernised Starter Dairy Farm.

104.   Highways Schemes   *Forecast spend £57.818m*

105.   There has been a reduction of £1.199m since the quarter 1 report, this is due to changes across a number of projects within the programme, most notable being the refinement of Stafford Western Access Route as the project nears completion and risk allowances have been reduced by £0.257m.

106.   **Finance and Resources & ICT**   **Forecast spend £0.689m**

107.   There has been a reduction of £65,000 since quarter 1 due to the refining of the Data Centre refresh budgets.

108.   **Financial Health**

109.   Appendix 6 provides a forecast outturn performance against the key Financial Health Indicators approved as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

110.   There have been 98.0% of invoices paid within 30 days of receiving them at the end of August, exceeding the financial health indicator target. This position also reflects early payments to suppliers to help them with cashflow during the pandemic.

111.   The estimated level of outstanding sundry debt over 6 months old is £19.827m, this is over the target of £14.7m by £5.127m. This is a decrease of £86,000 since the quarter 1 report. The debt recovery process involves chasing by a range of methods with the eventual escalation to the external collection agent or to Legal for the possibility of a court decision to recover the debt. It should be noted that a return to full debt recovery services, including legal action was only possible from September 2020 due to Covid 19.

112.   The level of CCG health debt over 6 months old is £1.2m below the target figure. This is a decrease of £0.220m since the quarter 1 report.

113.   Client debt now stands at £9.496m and could potentially increase as a consequence of the on-going pandemic. A working group has been established to look at why clients are not paying debts and to implement ways to avoid clients getting into debt in the first instance, this includes an initiative to encourage and assist clients with setting up direct debit instructions.

Debtor Type	2021/22 Target	30/06/2021	30/09/2021 Est	Increase / (Decrease)

	£m	£m	£m	£m
Health Bodies & CCGs	3.900	2.969	2.749	**(0.220)**
Other Govt. and Public Bodies	2.000	3.247	3.233	**(0.014)**
Other General Debtors (Individuals & Commercial)	4.700	4.015	4.349	**0.334**
Health & Care Client Debt	4.100	9.682	9.496	(0.186)
TOTAL	**14.700**	**19.913**	**19.827**	**(0.086)**

Equalities implications:
Through the delivery of county council business plans, service delivery is increasingly reflecting the diverse needs of our various communities.

Legal implications:
There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Resource and Value for money implications:
The resource and Value for money implications are set out in the report.

Risk implications:
The risk implications concern the robustness of the forecast outturn which may change owing to pressures on services with a consequent effect on county council functions being able to keep within budgets and a potential call on balances.

Climate Change implications:
Staffordshire's communities are places where people and organisations proactively tackle climate change, gaining financial benefit and reducing carbon emissions' is one of the county council's priority outcomes. Through the monitoring and management of this outcome; climate change and carbon emissions are being addressed in an active manner.

Health Impact Assessment and Community Impact Assessment screening:
Not required for this report.

Report authors:

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Revenue Forecast Outturn 2021/22

	Revised Budget Qtr 2	Forecast Outturn	Covid Impact	Normal Service Overspend /	Total Variation
	£m	£m		(Savings)	£m
Health and Care					
Public Health & Prevention	0.263	0.263	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adult Social Care & Safeguarding	40.800	40.698	0.240	(0.102)	0.138
Care Commissioning	185.606	184.696	4.127	(0.910)	3.217
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	(0.263)	(0.263)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Health and Care Total	**226.406**	**225.394**	**4.367**	**(1.012)**	**3.355**
Families and Communities					
Children's Services	118.197	119.854	7.766	1.657	9.423
Children's Public Health	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Education Services	33.018	32.754	0.417	(0.264)	0.153
Culture and Communities	5.438	5.417	0.135	(0.021)	0.114
Rural	2.356	2.264	0.092	(0.092)	0.000
Community Safety	8.323	8.268	0.000	(0.055)	(0.055)
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Families and Communities Total	**167.332**	**168.557**	**8.410**	**1.225**	**9.635**
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills					
Business & Enterprise	2.194	2.194	0.000	0.000	0.000
Infrastructure & Highways	29.687	29.687	0.310	0.000	0.310
Transport, Connectivity & Waste	39.880	39.603	1.723	(0.277)	1.446
Skills	2.435	2.345	0.000	(0.090)	(0.090)
EI&S Business Support	1.097	1.097	0.000	0.000	0.000
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Covid related capital project costs	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Total	**75.293**	**74.926**	**2.033**	**(0.367)**	**1.666**
Corporate Services	33.528	32.938	0.486	(0.590)	(0.104)
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	(0.310)	0.000	(0.310)	(0.310)
Corporate Services Total	**33.528**	**32.628**	**0.486**	**(0.900)**	**(0.414)**
Traded Services	**(0.622)**	**(0.622)**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**
TOTAL PORTFOLIO BUDGETS	**501.937**	**500.883**	**15.296**	**(1.054)**	**14.242**
Centrally Controlled Items					
Interest on Balances & Debt Charges	34.669	34.669	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pooled Buildings and Insurances	27.647	27.493	0.124	(0.154)	(0.030)
Investment Fund	0.798	0.798	0.000	0.000	0.000
Covid 19 Grant	0.000	0.000	(16.204)	0.000	(16.204)
TOTAL FORECAST OVERSPEND	**565.051**	**563.843**	**(0.784)**	**(1.208)**	**(1.992)**

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

	1st Quarter Budget	Enhancements to Programme	2nd Quarter Budget
	£m	£m	£m
Health and Care			
Care and Independence	6.926	(5.583)	1.343
Health and Care Total	**6.926**	**(5.583)**	**1.343**
Families and Communities			
Maintained Schools	33.742	10.565	44.307
Rural County (Countryside)	0.790	(0.072)	0.718
Vulnerable Children's Projects	0.084	0.000	0.084
Tourism and Culture	0.013	0.000	0.013
Families and Communities Total	**34.629**	**10.493**	**45.122**
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills			
Economic Planning & Future Prosperity	11.968	(0.770)	11.198
Highways Schemes	59.017	(1.199)	57.818
Connectivity	1.430	0.000	1.430
Waste & Sustainability Projects	0.379	0.000	0.379
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Total	**72.794**	**(1.969)**	**70.825**
Trading Services - County Fleet Care	0.507	0.000	0.507
Finance, Resources & ICT	0.754	(0.065)	0.689
Property	11.050	0.000	11.050
Corporate Leased Equipment	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total	**126.660**	**2.876**	**129.536**

Financial Health Indicators 2021/22

Indicator	Current Performance
<u>Debtors</u> Level of outstanding general debtors more than 6 months old does not exceed £14.7m (Current Performance – £19.8m)	🔴 R
<u>Payments to suppliers</u> • At least 90% of invoices have been paid within 30 days of us receiving them during the last quarter (Current Performance – 98.0%) This reflects early payments to suppliers to help them with cashflow during the pandemic.	🟢 G
<u>Monitoring</u> Quarterly financial monitoring reports have been issued to Cabinet during the last 12 months	🟢 G
The council's most recent revenue outturn forecast did not vary by more than +/-2% when compared to the overall revenue budget	🟢 G
Quarterly monitoring reports of progress against MTFS savings have been produced for the Senior Leadership Team during the last 12 months	🟢 G
🔴 R Indicator not met	🟠 A Indicator not met by small margin	🟢 G Indicator met

Staffordshire County Council

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 16 November 2021

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan

Recommendations

I recommend that:

a. The Committee consider and provide feedback on the attached draft Cabinet Report and its recommendations. (Appendix 1)

b. The Committee provide feedback on the Action Plan (Appendix 2), as well as their experiences of working within equalities frameworks.

Report of Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider and provide feedback on the attached draft Cabinet Report and Action Plan.

2. This feedback will then be used to inform the final Cabinet Report and Action Plan ahead of discussion with Cabinet on 15th December.

Report

Background

3. The draft Cabinet Report proposes that the Council adopts three overarching Diversity, Inclusion and Equality Principles, alongside four specific Objectives for 2021-23, to further strengthen its commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council and Staffordshire.

Considerations for Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4. A draft of this Cabinet report is attached as appendix 1 to this report. It is recommended that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the findings and recommendations of this draft report, and share their views on the following:

   a. Their views on the Cabinet report, including the proposed Diversity and Inclusion Objectives and principles.

   b. Their views on the Action Plan (appendix 2).

5. The discussion with the Committee today will inform the final version of the report for Cabinet in December.

Link to Strategic Plan

6. Tackling inequalities is at the core of everything Staffordshire County Council does. The Council's vision, outlined in the Strategic Plan is that everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Community Impact

7. A draft Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been attached as appendix 3 to this report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – DRAFT Cabinet Report (15th December 2021) 'Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan'

Appendix 2 – DRAFT Action Plan for delivery of Principles and Objectives

Appendix 3 – Summary of engagement activities (September 2020 – February 2021)

Appendix 4 – DRAFT Community Impact Assessment

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Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 December 2021

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan

Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

"Insert quote agreed with relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Communications Team. Contact Paula Wright or Paul Dutton for assistance."

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Adopt the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles, Objectives and Action Plan, as part of the Council's commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion

Cabinet – Wednesday 15 December 2021

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Adopt the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles, Objectives and Action Plan, as part of the Council's commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Tackling inequalities is at the core of everything Staffordshire County Council does. The Council's proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles and Objectives, aligned to our Strategic Plan and People Strategy, further strengthen our commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council and Staffordshire. The Objectives and Action Plan outlines how we will deliver this commitment over the next two years.

2. The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to show they are advancing the equality agenda under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Councils are required to publish at least one Equality Objective every four years to demonstrate how they will eliminate discrimination and advance equality.

3. Over the last 12 months, work has been undertaken to identify how we can strengthen delivery against our Equalities Duties, this has included reviewing the approaches of other local authorities and engaging with a range of stakeholders.

4. This report recommends the Council adopts three overarching principles, which covers our role as a place leader, deliverer of services and employers. Alongside the principles, this report recommends that the Council adopts four objectives for 2021-23, which we will focus resources and action on.

5. Progress against the principles and objectives will be overseen by the Director of Corporate Services and the Leader of the Council. An annual

monitoring report will be produced to evidence progress against the principles, objectives and action plan.

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty

6. The Equality Act 2010 provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. In 2011, the public sector equality duty (the equality duty) came into force, created under the Equality Act. As a public body, the Council are required to:

   a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
   b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
   c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7. It is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. These are referred to as protected characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

8. The Council is also required to:

   a. Publish an annual Gender Pay Report
   b. Publish an annual Workforce Profile
   c. Publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve, to further any of the aims of the general equality duty every four years.

Proposed Principles and Objectives 2021-2023

9. Adopting a set of Principles, sets out our ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion, in our county, in delivering our services, and as an employer. These Principles align to our core strategies, including our Strategic Plan and People Strategy.

10. The proposed Principles are:

    a. Staffordshire is a place where there is equality of opportunity for all, regardless of circumstances.
    b. Staffordshire County Council is an inclusive and diverse employer, where our people feel they have the opportunity to succeed and progress.
    c. Staffordshire County Council develops and delivers services that are inclusive and accessible to all.

11. Setting Equality Objectives, enables the Council to focus attention and resources on a number of priorities for the next two years, to help us deliver against our Principles. We are proposing that we set four Objectives for the period 2021-23.

12. The proposed Objectives are:

   a. Review and strengthen our recruitment and retention processes and practices
   b. Review and strengthen our diversity and inclusion training offer to employees
   c. Strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities on diversity and inclusion issues
   d. Raise awareness of, and celebrate diversity

13. An initial Action Plan has been developed to take forward the proposed Objectives, and is outlined in Appendix 1. The Action Plan will continue to evolve and develop over time. Continuing to engage and collaborate with stakeholders, including staff, Elected Members, Trade Unions and our communities, will be key to evolving and delivering against the Action Plan.

14. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the proposed Principles and Objectives will be published on the Council website, and embedded across the organisation.

15. Progress against the principles and objectives will be overseen by the Director of Corporate Services and the Leader of the Council. An annual monitoring report will be produced to evidence progress against the principles, objectives and action plan.

Legal Implications

16. Paragraphs 6-8 of this report outline the Council's legal requirements. The actions in this report, and the adoption of the proposed Principles and Objectives will contribute towards meeting our legal requirements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

17. There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
Appendix 2 – Summary of Engagement

Appendix 3 – Community Impact Assessment -

Contact Details

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Report Author: Sarah Getley
Job Title: Assistant Director for People
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E-Mail Address: sarah.getley@staffordshire.gov.uk

Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Plan

Objective 1 - Review and strengthen our recruitment and retention processes and practices		
Action	**Lead**	**Date**
Roll out the **Employer Brand** proposition and promote externally	Kesh Ladwa (People)	Ongoing
Review, and put in place plans to improve existing **recruitment practices**, including fair recruitment practices, to attract more diverse candidates to SCC	Kesh Ladwa (People)	Jan. 22
Develop and promote a **SCC work experience scheme** to attract candidates from diverse and/or underrepresented backgrounds	Kesh Ladwa (People)	March. 22
Use latest **recruitment methods** to recruit candidates, including virtual career fairs, disability friendly tools like 'recite me', etc	Kesh Ladwa (People)	Ongoing
Oversee the roll-out of a SCC **apprenticeship scheme** to encourage applications from diverse and/or underrepresented backgrounds	Kesh Ladwa/Sakhu Ngwenya (People)	March. 22
Improve the completion of **protected characteristic data** by staff, to better understand the profile of our workforce	Kesh Ladwa (People)	Dec. 22
Develop a **mentorship scheme** which connects senior leaders with staff that identify as belonging to a protected group, promote the scheme internally	Nicola Jackson (L&D)	March. 22

| Ensure that our **HR policies** support our diversity and inclusion Principles, and we develop zero-tolerance HR policies relating to discrimination/ bullying | Tracey Darby (People) | March. 22 |

Objective 2 - Review and strengthen our diversity and inclusion training offer to employees

Action	Lead	Date
Review existing Diversity and Inclusion training across the organisation and identify areas for further development	Sakhu Ngwenya (People)	March. 22
Develop and roll out specific diversity and inclusion **training to support revised recruitment processes**	Sakhu Ngwenya (People)	June. 22
Develop **different forms of training** to suit different learning styles, including webinars, playlists, workshop	Sakhu Ngwenya (People)	June. 22

Objective 3 - Strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities on diversity and inclusion issues

Action	Lead	Date
Capture Diversity and Inclusion related insights from all staff through frequent **PULSE surveys**	Kesh Ladwa (People)	June. 22
Create a **toolkit for staff to develop self-managed staff networks**	Lucy Croxton (Strategy) Kesh Ladwa (People) Nicola Jackson (L&D)	Mar. 22

Develop a proposition for establishing a formal **Intersectional Staff Forum**	Nicola Jackson (L&D)	Apr. 22
Explore with public sector partners the potential to establish a **forum for the Staffordshire public sector to share best practice** on diversity and inclusion – this feels like it would be hugely helpful, creating a network of practitioners across Staffordshire, sharing action plans and thinking	Kerry Dove (Strategy)	March. 22
Review how Staffordshire County Council **engages with diverse communities to shape services**	Kerry Dove (Strategy)	Apr. 22

Objective 4 - Raise awareness of, and celebrate diversity		
Action	**Lead**	**Date**
Deliver internal and external communications (where appropriate) against the agreed **Calendar of Events**	Gabrielle Hyde (Comms)	Ongoing
Share case studies from SCC staff (covering a broad spectrum of different ages, races, religions etc) internally/externally as part of the **Employer Brand** proposition	Kesh Ladwa (People)	Mar. 22
Review **internal and external diversity and inclusion webpages** to ensure that they reflect the breadth of work ongoing	Nicola Jackson (L&D) Lucy Croxton	Mar. 22

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

1. Introduction

Across Autumn 2020 and early 2021 the Council engaged with a range of stakeholders to understand how we can strengthen our approach to Diversity and Inclusion. That engagement involved:

- Staff and Union workshops
- Community Stakeholder and Members' workshops

In total, over 70+ staff, trade unions, community stakeholders and Members participated in the workshops. Findings from the sessions are outlined below.

2. Staff and Trade Union workshops

To facilitate the staff and Trade Union workshops SCC commissioned an independent organisation, with a specialism in diversity and inclusion - EA Inclusion.

They proposed five priority recommendations from the workshops:
- Recruitment – attendees spoke about how they would like SCC to find new and innovative ways to recruit and encourage talent to work within the organisation.
- Communication – attendees suggested that engagement with people and groups from the community was key to improve diversity and inclusion and wanted honest and open communication.
- Training – attendees would like formal training on diversity and inclusion, including training on how to recruit diversely and inclusively, which should be underpinned with measurements of impact.
- Raising Awareness – attendees suggested a mentoring scheme which would help raise awareness of protected characteristics and improve progression.
- Celebrating Differences – it was felt that celebrating differences was a good thing and attendees noted the desktop backgrounds that focused on days of cultural or religious significance as a positive contribution.

3. Community Stakeholders and Members' workshops

The workshops were guided around two questions:
- How well do you currently feel the County Council addresses inclusion and diversity?
- What are your ideas on what more we could do to be more inclusive and diverse?

The key themes that came from engagement with Community Stakeholders were:

Community engagement:
- Attendees identified engagement with young people, minority groups and other disadvantaged groups as crucial.

- It was suggested that joint working with other public sector groups, e.g. NHS, Districts/Boroughs would strengthen the Council's current approach.
- The VCSE sector was acknowledged as playing an important role in supporting EDI.

Representation
- The importance of highlighting diversity through the Staffordshire Place branding project was highlighted.
- The need for development of the Council's EDI webpages was highlighted.

Training
- Need to develop and improve the quality of the Council's EDI training.

The key themes that came from engagement with Members were:

Recruitment
- It was identified that there was a need for better representation for people with protected characteristics, including young people within the workforce, particularly in front-facing roles.
- It was felt that barriers to recruitment (such as advertising internal only) could be reduced to attract diverse talent to the organisation.

Engagement
- It was recognised that engagement with minority communities should not be limited to a particular level of community representatives, and any engagement should be culturally sensitive.
- Members identified value in learning from others in the public and private sectors.

Anti-discrimination
- A robust Code of Conduct and reporting process for Members and workforce is crucial, in the context of discriminatory experiences.

Training
- Mandatory inclusion and diversity training for both Members and staff was suggested.

4. Conclusion

Feedback from the initial stakeholder workshops has been incorporated into the proposed Diversity and Inclusion Principles, Objectives and Action Plan. The four Objectives for 2021-2023 relate directly to:
- Recruitment
- Training
- Communication and engagement
- Raising awareness and celebrating

The Action Plan will continue to evolve and develop over time as we continue to engage and collaborate with stakeholders.

Community Impact Assessment Checklist and Executive Summary

Name of Proposal:

Diversity and Inclusion – Draft Principles, Objectives and Action Plan

Project Sponsor:

Sarah Getley, Assistant Director for People
Kerry Dove, Head of Strategy and Digital

Project Manager:

N/A

Date Completed:

18/10/21

Final Checklist

Prior to submitting your Community Impact Assessment (CIA), please ensure that the actions on the checklist below have been completed, to reassure yourself / SLT / Cabinet that the CIA process has been undertaken appropriately.

Checklist	Action Completed	Comments/Actions
The project supports the Council's Business Plan, priorities and MTFS.	X	
It is clear what the decision is or what decision is being requested.	X	
For decisions going to Cabinet, the CIA findings are reflected in the Cabinet Report and **potential impacts are clearly identified and mitigated for** (where possible).	X	
The **aims, objectives and outcomes** of the policy, service or project have been clearly identified.	X	
The **groups** who will be affected by the policy, service or project have been clearly identified.	X	
The **communities** that are likely to be more adversely impacted than others have been clearly identified.	X	
Engagement / consultation has been undertaken and is representative of the residents most likely to be affected.	X	
A range of people with the appropriate knowledge and expertise have contributed to the CIA.	X	
Appropriate evidence has been provided and used to inform the development and design of the policy, service or project. This includes data, research, engagement/consultation, case studies and local knowledge.	X	
The CIA **evidences** how the Council has considered its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and how it	X	

Checklist	Action Completed	Comments/Actions
has considered the impacts of any change on people with protected characteristics.		
The next steps to deliver the project have been identified.	X	

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is intended to be a collation of the key issues and findings from the CIA and other research undertaken. This should be completed after the CIA and research has been completed. Please structure the summary using the headings on the left that relate to the sections in the CIA template. Where no major impacts have been identified, please state N/A.

	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
PSED **What are the impacts on residents with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010? Highlight any concerns that have emerged as a result of the equality analysis on any of the protected groups and how these will be mitigated. It is important that Elected Members are fully aware of the equality duties so that they can make an informed decision, and this can be supported with robust evidence.**	All employees with protected characteristics will be impacted by the Diversity and Inclusion principles, objectives and delivery plan. Residents may be indirectly affected as part of SCC's service delivery.	The principles, objectives and delivery plan promote equality of opportunity across SCC for all protected characteristics.	There is a need to capture a greater range of equalities data from SCC staff and improve diversity across the workforce. This will be done as part of the Diversity and Inclusion scheme of work. There is an organisational risk to SCC if we do not develop Equality Objectives, as we have a public sector duty to do so as part of the Equality Act 2010.	• SCC has developed four Equality Objectives for the years 21-23. The Objectives focus on the areas of improvement identified from engagement with staff, unions, Members and community stakeholders. • As part of these Objectives, SCC will: review and strengthen recruitment and retention processes and practices, improve the diversity and inclusion training offer for employees, improve the approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities, and raise awareness of diversity within our organisation.
Health and Care **How will the proposal impact on residents' health? How will the proposal impact on demand for or access to social care or health services?**	The proposal may benefit the mental health of staff and indirectly benefit the	N/A	N/A	• SCC will encourage the development of self-managed staff networks to create a

	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	mental health of residents.			supporting working environment for staff. • SCC will develop an external community forum to provide a means for feedback on diversity and inclusion across Staffordshire (as part of Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan).
Economy **How will the proposal impact on the economy of Staffordshire or impact on the income of Staffordshire's residents?**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Environment **How will the proposal impact on the physical environment of Staffordshire? Does this proposal have any Climate Change implications?**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Localities / Communities **How will the proposal impact on Staffordshire's communities?**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Staffordshire
County Council

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 16 November 2021

VCSE Capacity Building Recommission

Recommendations

I recommend that:

a. The Committee consider the attached draft Cabinet Report and its recommendations.

b. The Committee provide feedback on the proposed commissioning of a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework, as well as their experiences of working with the VCSE sector in Staffordshire.

Report of Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider the attached draft Cabinet Report and provide feedback on their experiences working with the VCSE sector, as well as their views on the proposed new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

2. This feedback will then be used to inform the final report ahead of discussion with Cabinet on 15th December as well as the final specification that goes to market in January 2022 (subject to Cabinet approval).

Report

Background

3. The Council's current arrangements for VCSE sector capacity building support are due to end on 31st July 2022.

4. With this in mind, a report is being taken to Cabinet in December that recommends that:

a. Cabinet consider a brief update on our current approach to VCSE capacity building, including the findings of recent engagement with key stakeholders.

b. Cabinet give approval to go out to market to commission a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework in January 2022.

c. Cabinet delegate to the Director for Corporate Services the authority to award contracts from the new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

Considerations for Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5. A draft of this Cabinet report is attached as appendix 1 to this report. It is recommended that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the findings and recommendations of this draft report, and share their views on the following:

a. Their experiences of working with the VCSE sector, particularly following Covid-19.

b. Their views on the proposed new VCSE Capacity Building Framework and the priorities it is aiming to achieve (as set out in the draft Cabinet Report).

6. The discussion with the Committee today will inform the final version of the report for Cabinet in December. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the discussion with the Committee will also inform the final specifications for the VCSE Capacity Building Framework ahead of going out to market in January 2022.

Link to Strategic Plan

7. A strong and sustainable VCSE sector is critical to the delivery of our strategic priorities, particularly the work of the Communities principle. This work is an action set out in the Communities Delivery Plan 2021/22, as agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

Community Impact

8. A draft Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been attached as appendix 2 to this report. This has been informed by stakeholder engagement that took place between May – June 2021. This CIA is still in draft and will continue to be developed ahead of Cabinet in December.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – DRAFT Cabinet Report (15th December 2021) 'VCSE Capacity Building Recommission'

Appendix 2 – DRAFT Community Impact Assessment – VCSE Capacity Building Recommission

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Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 December 2021

VCSE Capacity Building Recommission

Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture said,

Report Summary:

This report provides Cabinet with the following information regarding Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector capacity building activity in Staffordshire:

a. A brief overview of our current VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership contract.

b. A summary of feedback from key stakeholders, including commissioners, Members, and the local VCSE sector.

c. Proposals for investing in VCSE capacity building activity once the current arrangements end on 31st July 2022, including commissioning a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Consider the brief update provided on our current approach to VCSE capacity building, including the findings of recent engagement with key stakeholders.

b. Give Cabinet approval to go out to market to commission a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

c. Delegate to the Director for Corporate Services the authority to award contracts as part of the new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

Cabinet – Wednesday 15 December 2021

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) Capacity Building Recommission

Recommendation(s) of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Consider the brief update provided on our current approach to VCSE capacity building, including the findings of recent engagement with key stakeholders.

b. Give Cabinet approval to go out to market to commission a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

c. Delegate to the Director for Corporate Services the authority to award contracts as part of the new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. A strong and sustainable VCSE sector is essential to achieving the Council's priorities and the ongoing recovery of our communities from Covid-19.

2. The Council's current arrangements for VCSE sector capacity building support are due to end on 31st July 2022. With this in mind, this report makes a series of recommendations for how we can continue to invest in VCSE capacity building activity moving forward.

3. These recommendations have been informed by the work of the previous contract, feedback from key stakeholders, and the lessons learned from the response to Covid-19.

Report

Overview

4. Working with our communities to ensure residents can help themselves and each other is central to everything we do and is a key principle of our Strategic Plan 2018-22.

5. The Council's Communities Delivery Plan 2021/22 was agreed by Cabinet in December 2020. The plan builds on a strong record of working alongside our communities to design and deliver innovative and financially sustainable services that are well used by local communities.

6. An essential part of this success has been how we have worked alongside our local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. Through our VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership contract, the VCSE sector has played a central role in building capacity in our communities and helping us to deliver against a number of our strategic priorities.

7. This was particularly evident in the VCSE sector's crucial role in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The relationships developed through the VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership have helped organise, support, and sustain the mobilisation of our communities to the pandemic.

8. The current contract ends on 31st July 2022. Looking ahead, the VCSE sector will continue to play a vital role in the recovery from Covid-19 and addressing health inequalities resulting from the pandemic. The VCSE sector will also be a central part of delivering our key strategic priorities, including Supportive Communities, the Staffordshire Young People's Offer, the Place Based Approach, and the Communities principle.

9. **It is critical that we continue to work alongside our partners and invest in the VCSE sector. This investment will help to ensure the VCSE sector remains strong, sustainable, and has the stability required to continue supporting our communities to recover from the pandemic.**

VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership – Overview

10. Staffordshire County Council commissioned its VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership contract in August 2016. In February 2019, Cabinet agreed to extend the contract for a further 3 years, running until 31st July 2021.

11. Since 2016, the contract has focused on delivering the following:

    a. Building capacity in the local VCSE sector in a targeted way, focusing on prevention, early help, and local need.

    b. Supporting the local VCSE sector to be sustainable and lead on bringing additional funding into Staffordshire.

    c. Providing strong leadership, working in partnership with other infrastructure organisations locally, and effectively supporting the Council to deliver its priorities - including Supportive Communities, Early Help, and the Place Based Approach.

    d. Ensuring the Council can work effectively with the VCSE sector to co-design commissioning strategies and community-based approaches.

12. The contract also enables the County Council to evidence how it delivers on its statutory obligations regarding the local offer for young people. This includes ensuring sufficient positive activities are available across the County, engaging with and representing the views of young people, and mapping our local young people's offer.

Stakeholder Feedback

13. Three online surveys took place between May and June 2021, seeking the views of Council officers, Members, and VCSE groups on VCSE capacity building support.

14. The surveys found that VCSE capacity building support is valued. 96% of respondents believed that the Council should continue to invest in VCSE capacity building once the current contract has ended (126 of 131 respondents across the three surveys – 98% of VCSE organisations, 96% of Members, and 90% of officers).

15. The surveys also provided a range of additional views and experiences on the current contract including:

   a. **VCSE sector feedback on current support** – The support most frequently accessed includes funding / income generation (64%), information, advice, and guidance (IAG) (64%), training (63%), networking (51%), and safeguarding (47%). Many groups said that this support has been vital to keeping their organisations sustainable and working in a safe way. The sector also said that regular guidance, updates, and funding support during Covid-19 was "invaluable", "very supportive" and key to helping many groups stay financially sustainable during the pandemic.

   b. **VCSE sector feedback on future support** – When asked what future support would help them to work with their local communities, many VCSE groups said they value what they currently receive, in particular support for fundraising, networking, volunteering, IAG, and promotion of VCSE support to communities.

   c. **Members feedback** – 83% of Members surveyed were aware of the current VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership contract and 50% had worked with both current providers. Many Members expressed the need for ongoing support for the VCSE sector, particularly the importance of the Staffordshire Young People's Offer, addressing social isolation, and recovery from Covid-19.

   d. **SCC Officer feedback** – Commissioner feedback highlighted the important role of the current contract in the Communities principle, Supportive Communities, Early Help, digital inclusion, and the response to Covid-19.

Looking Forward

16. **Ensuring the VCSE sector is sustainable and has sufficient capacity is essential to Staffordshire's recovery from Covid-19.** Building and sustaining capacity in the sector will also be vital to addressing the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on our communities, as well as supporting us to deliver our strategic priorities such as Supportive Communities, the Staffordshire Young People's Offer, the Place Based Approach, and the Communities principle.

17. **The end of the current arrangements on the 31st July 2022 presents an opportunity for the Council to refresh its relationship with the VCSE sector**. This will allow the Council to build on the lessons learned since 2016, as well as how we worked differently with partners and communities during our response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

18. **Continuing to invest in VCSE capacity building would provide stability for the VCSE sector at a crucial time**, as well as empowering volunteers and grassroots community organisations to come together and help their local communities.

VCSE Capacity Building Framework

19. With this in mind, **this report recommends that Cabinet agree to go to market to commission a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework in January 2022, with a view to new arrangements being in place by 1st August 2022.**

20. This new VCSE Capacity Building Framework will look to achieve the following:

   a. Ensure the VCSE sector remains sustainable as communities continue to recover from Covid-19.

   b. Build capacity in communities to support the Council to deliver its priorities. This includes the Supportive Communities programme, the Staffordshire Young People's Offer, and the Place Based Approach.

   c. Provide a flexible, responsive, and transparent way of commissioning additional work with the VCSE sector and partners, learning the lessons from our response to Covid-19.

   d. Provide an effective way of contract managing our VCSE capacity building activity that is efficient for both commissioners and providers.

21. It is proposed that the Framework is put in place for a minimum of three years, with the option to extend for a further fourth year. This extension will be dependent on both the Council's annual MTFS process and a review of performance to date.

22. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the commissioning process will go out to market in January 2022. Contracts under the Framework will be awarded in Spring 2022, with the new arrangements aiming to go live by 1st August 2022 to ensure there is no gap in provision.

23. In order to ensure this commissioning process is timely and effective, **this report also recommends that delegated authority is given to the Director for Corporate Services (SLT lead) to award call off contracts under the new VCSE Capacity Building Framework.**

Legal Implications

24. There are no specific legal implications for the commissioning of a new VCSE Capacity Building Framework. If Cabinet approves the recommendations of this report, the commissioning process will follow all relevant and appropriate procurement and legal requirements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

25. The available budget for recommissioning VCSE capacity building support is up to £500,000 per annum. This budget will cover the priorities set out in paragraph 20a and 20b of this report.

26. As discussed in paragraph 20c, the proposed Framework will also allow for additional work to be 'called off' as required. This will enable us to work more flexibly and quickly with the VCSE sector and partners to respond to future community needs.

27. There is currently no confirmed budget for this additional activity and the Framework will be used as and when additional work and funding becomes available in the future. However, in order to meet the requirements of our commissioning processes and EU regulations, a provisional budget for future work has been set at up to £TBC for additional activity over the lifetime of the Framework.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Community Impact Assessment – VCSE Capacity Building Recommission

Contact Details

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Community Impact Assessment

Name of Proposal:

VCSE Capacity Building Recommission

Project Sponsor:

Kerry Dove, Head of Strategy and Digital

Project Manager:

Adam Rooney, Senior Policy Officer

Date Completed:

21/10/21

Completing a CIA

- A CIA will help you to identify the potential **impacts, risks and benefits** of your proposed policy, service or project. Doing this at an early stage enables engagement and research to be undertaken to identify actions that will either **lessen the risk** or **maximise the benefits**. The assessment will also help you to identify mitigating factors whereby risks may be balanced out to an extent by the benefits.

- This template should be used to support the development of a proposal during the **planning stage**, therefore supporting the council's approach of Achieving Commissioning Excellence.

- A good CIA will involve input from more than one person. A **Project Team** should be identified with different, but relevant expertise to ensure that a full range of views are considered.

- **Engagement and/or consultation** should take place with appropriate and representative groups of people that are most likely to be affected. This must then be used to help shape the design/outcomes of the project. Please note that due to the publication of CIAs, it is advisable not to record personal details of members of the public, such as names or addresses.

- **Once completed,** the main findings from your CIA should be transferred to the **'Checklist and Executive Summary'** template. Then both documents need to be approved/signed off by the appropriate people. Depending on the size of your project, this could be your manager, project lead, sponsor or SLT.

- For CIAs that are going to **Cabinet**, only the **'Checklist and Executive Summary'** will be uploaded as part of the **Cabinet Papers**. The full CIA document will be uploaded as a **Background Paper**.

Completing the CIA Template

This table describes what is required when completing the key sections of your assessment.

Which groups will be affected	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Which groups of people will be impacted by the proposed policy, service or project? This could be people in a particular area, a street, or a group of people with similar characteristics e.g. older people, young people or people with care needs. Also consider staff, residents and other external stakeholders.	Think about the impact the proposal may have on each of the different category areas and identify the benefits of each decision.	Think about the impact the proposal may have on each of the different category areas, and identify the risks associated with the proposal.	Set out any recommendations as to how the benefits will be maximised and the risks minimised. Also highlight any trade-offs that may occur.
	Please note: • Potential impacts should **not** be included if it is considered highly unlikely that they would occur. • Where **no major impacts** have been identified, please state N/A. • Due to the publication of CIAs, it is **advisable not to record personal details of members of the public**, such as names or addresses.		
Evidence Base: (Evidence used/ likelihood/ size of impact) How certain are you about the assessment of each potential impact, and what evidence have you used to arrive at the decision? E.g. Data – population trends data, census data, service data. Research – national, regional, local research. Engagement/ Consultation – with partners, the public, the voluntary sector.			

Use the following template to highlight the impacts of your proposal on each of the following categories: The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Health and Care, the Economy, the Environment, and Localities/ Communities.

Staffordshire County Council

Community Impact Assessment

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Use this section to identify if the proposal will impact on our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 for both residents and staff. In summary, those subject to the general equality duty must have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups.

Please consider:
- Who is currently using the service, across the protected characteristics?
- What do we know about their experiences and outcomes?
- What relevant information is available from the Census and population trends data?
- What were the findings of the engagement/consultation?
- Is there any relevant national, regional and/or local sources of research/evidence available?
- Is there any relevant information from partners or voluntary, community, social enterprise organisations?
- What is the analysis of the impact on those with relevant protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
All / multiple protected characteristics	All / multiple protected characteristics	The following benefits apply to multiple / all of the protected characteristics: • People with protected characteristics can benefit from a strong and sustainable VCSE sector, as well as the services provided by VCSE groups.	The following risks apply to multiple / all of the protected characteristics: • If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability of the VCSE sector.	The following mitigations apply to multiple / all of the protected characteristics: • Review potential options for continuing to invest in VCSE capacity building through a VCSE Capacity Building Framework put forward by the Cabinet Report.

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
		• A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework will support more residents and VCSE organisations to provide support to their local communities. • This includes residents with protected characteristics.	• It could also result in fewer VCSE organisations being available to provide community-based support for people with protected characteristics. • Those organisations that remain could potentially have less access to training and support to ensure they deliver safe and effective services.	• Ensure people with protected characteristics are considered when putting in place any new arrangements. • Engage with the VCSE sector to get their views on any proposed new arrangements. • Ensure the lessons learned from the response to Covid-19 are considered in any new arrangements.
Race	People of all races / ethnicities	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Disability	People with disabilities that do not require specialist care / support (in particular SEND).	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • The VCSE sector and community-based support are a central part of our Supportive Communities and Early Help approaches. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework could continue to ensure VCSE groups in these areas are supported to remain sustainable and continue to help their communities.	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the delivery of key programmes that support people with disabilities.	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • Further engage with VCSE groups that work with people with disabilities as required as part of any future engagement activity on VCSE capacity building support. • Co-ordinate any activity in this area moving forward with other work in Families and Communities relating to advocacy, representation, and engagement with young people who have disabilities.

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Sex	All	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Age	All (children and young people/ older people in particular).	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • The current contract provides specific support for Supportive Communities. A key element of this work is working with the VCSE to support older people to stay independent and resilient. • This also includes specific work with VCSE groups to support potentially vulnerable people through the recovery from Covid-19. • The current contract also supports the Council to evidence and deliver its statutory offer locally for young people. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework could continue to ensure VCSE groups in these areas are supported to remain sustainable and continue to help their communities.	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the delivery Supportive Communities / community-based support for recovery from Covid-19. • If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the delivery of our statutory offer for young people.	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • Further engage with VCSE groups that work with older people as required as part of any future engagement activity on VCSE capacity building support. • Further engage with VCSE groups that specialise in working with young people as required part of any future engagement activity on VCSE capacity building support. • Cross reference this CIA with the Children and Families Transformation CIA which will consider support for children and families in more detail.

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Religion or Belief	People of all faiths and beliefs. Religious based VCSE groups (e.g. church groups).	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Gender Reassignment	People who are transitioning / have undergone gender reassignment	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Sexual Orientation	People of all sexual orientations	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Pregnancy and Maternity	All	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Marriage and Civil Partnership The duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination also	No specific impact	N/A	N/A	N/A

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
covers marriage and civil partnerships in relation to employment issues.				
Impact on SCC Staff If the proposal affects SCC staff, consider the workforce profile compared against the protected characteristics pre and post change, the impact of job losses, available support for staff, and HR protocols.	Commissioners / front-line staff	• The VCSE sector play an important role in Supportive Communities, Early Help, and the Place Based Approach. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would help ensure that a strong and stable VCSE sector can provide important preventative support for communities to remain healthy, well, and independent.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, the Council could potentially see an increase in demand on front-line services.	• Consider the findings of recent online surveys with SCC commissioners and officers on VCSE capacity building support. • Further engage with commissioners and staff as required on any new arrangements.

Evidence Base: (Evidence used/ likelihood/ size of impact)

- *'Working with the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) in Staffordshire'* online surveys (May – June 2021)
- Performance Reporting / Contract management of existing VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership
- NCVO, 2021, *Pandemic Impact on charities continues to be 'uneven' but funding challenges are on horizon, research shows.* https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/2793-pandemic-impact-on-charities-continues-to-be-uneven-but-funding-challenges-are-on-horizon-research-shows
- House of Lords Select Committee on Public Services, 2020. *A critical juncture for public services: lessons from Covid-19.* https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3438/documents/32865/default/
- UK Youth, 2021. *The Impact of Covid-19 on England's youth organisations.* https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/UK-Youth-Fund-Report_1.pdf

Staffordshire County Council

Health and Care

Use this section to determine how the proposal will impact on resident's health and wellbeing, and whether the proposal will impact on the demands for, or access to health and care services. Please consider the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Category Area (Areas highlighted are suggestions only and there may be other impacts in these categories)	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
All	All	• A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework will support the Council to deliver its Supportive Communities and Early Help priorities. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would build capacity in the VCSE sector and continue to ensure VCSE groups are supported to remain sustainable and continue working in their communities. This includes groups that support people with: - Mental health and wellbeing, - Maintaining healthy lifestyles - Preventing accidents / falls - Help to live independently - Accessing social care.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the delivery of key programmes that support people with health and wellbeing. This includes groups that support people with: - Mental health and wellbeing, - Maintaining healthy lifestyles - Preventing accidents / falls - Help to live independently - Accessing social care.	• Ensure that any future arrangements include working with the VCSE sector to help deliver the Council's priorities around Health and Care, such as the Supportive Communities programme. • Ensure that support for Health and Care based VCSE organisations is a part of any future arrangements.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Will the proposal impact on the mental health and wellbeing of residents or services that support those with Mental Health issues?	All	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Healthy Lifestyles Will the proposal promote independence and personal responsibility, helping people to make positive choices around physical activity, healthy food and nutrition, smoking, problematic alcohol and substance use, and sexual health?	All	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Accidents and Falls Prevention Does the proposal reduce or increase the risk of: falls in older people, childhood accidents, road accidents, or	• Older people • People with disabilities	See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.

workplace accidents?				
Access to Social Care Will the proposal enable people to access appropriate interventions at the right time?		See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Independent Living Will the proposal impact on people's ability to live independently in their own home, with care and support from family, friends, and the community?		See first row for identified benefits.	See first row for identified risks.	See first row for mitigations / recommendations.
Safeguarding Will the proposal ensure effective safeguarding for the most vulnerable in our communities?		In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • The current VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership includes support for VCSE organisations on safeguarding training and developing safeguarding policies. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework continue to commission this support for VCSE organisations.	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on capability of some VCSE sector organisations to provide support for residents in the safest way possible.	In addition to information in the first row of this table, the following has been identified: • Ensure any decisions regarding future VCSE support arrangements consider the impact of any changes on safeguarding.

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Evidence Base: (Evidence used/ likelihood/ size of impact)

- *'Working with the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) in Staffordshire'* online surveys (May – June 2021)
- Performance Reporting / Contract management of existing VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership

Economy

Use this section to determine how the proposal will impact on the economy of Staffordshire and the income of residents.

Category Area (Areas highlighted are suggestions only and there may be other impacts in these categories)	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Economic Growth Will the proposal promote the county as a "go to" location for business, and make it easy for businesses to start up, innovate and expand?	VCSE sector, including social enterprises.	• The VCSE sector is an important part of Staffordshire's economy, and the current contract supports the VCSE sector, including Social Enterprises. • The VCSE across the county also currently receive support to grow and remain sustainable, including bringing additional funding into the Staffordshire. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would ensure the VCSE sector continues to receive support.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, this could reduce the amount of additional funding brought into the Staffordshire VCSE sector. • If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, this could impact on support currently provided for social enterprises.	• Consider the findings of recent online surveys with VCSE sector regarding VCSE capacity building support. • Further engage with local social enterprises if required on current support provided and the impact any changes would make.

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Category Area (Areas highlighted are suggestions only and there may be other impacts in these categories)	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Poverty and Income Will the proposal have an impact on income? Will it reduce the gap between high and low earners?	• The VCSE sector, including social enterprises • Residents with low incomes	• The VCSE sector plays an important role in supporting low-income families and individuals. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would build capacity and help ensure these organisations receive support to remain sustainable.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability / number of organisations that support low-income families and individuals.	• Ensure any future VCSE support arrangements are aligned to Council priorities around Early Help, the Place Based Approach and Supportive Communities.
Workplace Health and Environments Will the proposal impact on working conditions and the health of Staffordshire's workforce?	• The VCSE sector, including social enterprises • Volunteers	• The VCSE sector is a significant employer of both paid workers and volunteers. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would continue to ensure support was available for VCSE organisations with training, policies, governance and help with recruiting and supporting volunteers.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the ability of VCSE organisations to access support to improve conditions for their paid staff and volunteers.	• Ensure any decisions regarding future VCSE support arrangements consider the wider impacts on the VCSE sector as an employer.

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Category Area (Areas highlighted are suggestions only and there may be other impacts in these categories)	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Access to jobs/ Good quality jobs Will the proposal create the right conditions for increased employment in more and better jobs?	• The VCSE sector, including social enterprises • Young people	• The VCSE sector is a significant employer of both paid workers and volunteers. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would support these VCSE organisations to remain sustainable and potentially support the creation of new VCSE organisations in Staffordshire. • The current VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership includes support for VCSE groups working with young people.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability of VCSE organisations in Staffordshire. This could subsequently impact access to jobs in the county.	• Ensure any decisions regarding future VCSE support arrangements consider the wider impacts on the VCSE sector as an employer.

Evidence Base: (Evidence used/ likelihood/ size of impact)

- *'Working with the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) in Staffordshire'* online surveys (May – June 2021)
- Performance Reporting / Contract management of existing VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership

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Environment

Use this section to identify the impact of the proposal on the physical environment. How does the proposal support the utilisation and maintenance of Staffordshire's built and natural environments, thereby improving health and wellbeing and strengthening community assets?

Category Area (Areas highlighted are suggestions only and there may be other impacts in these categories)	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Built Environment/ Land Use Will the proposal impact on the built environment and land use?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rural Environment Will the proposal impact on the rural natural environment or on access to open spaces?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Air, Water and Land Quality Will the proposal affect air quality	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(e.g. vehicle, industrial or domestic emissions), drinking water quality or land quality (e.g. contamination)?				
Waste and Recycling Will the proposal affect waste (e.g. disposal) and recycling?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Agriculture and Food Production Will the proposal affect the production of healthy, affordable and culturally acceptable food?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Transport Will the proposal affect the ability of people/ communities/ business to travel? Will the proposal impact on walking/ cycling opportunities?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Noise Will the proposal cause disruptive noise?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Climate Change Does this proposal have any Climate Change implications?	VCSE organisations	• A future VCSE Capacity Building Framework will support / train VCSE organisations to operate in an environmentally sustainable way where possible.	N/A	N/A

Evidence Base: (Evidence used/ likelihood/ size of impact)

N/A

Localities and Communities

Use this section to identify the impact of the proposal on communities. How will the proposal strengthen community capacity to create safer and stronger communities? It is important to recognise the different localities and communities your proposal may impact upon and identify any communities that could be more adversely impacted than others. Strategic Delivery Managers (SDMs) have a great deal of knowledge about their relevant locality and they must be engaged with as part of your Project Team at an early stage of the process.

Category Area (Areas highlighted are suggestions only and there may be other impacts in these categories)	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Community Development/ Capacity Will the proposal affect opportunities to work with communities and strengthen or reduce community capacity?	VCSE organisations across the County.	• The VCSE across the county receive support from the current contract to grow and remain sustainable. • This includes support to start new groups, access funding, training, IAG and networking support. • In recent engagement activity with the VCSE sector, this support was valued by the vast majority of respondents. • The current contract also provides VCSE groups with support through Covid-19, including interpreting government guidance and accessing additional funding.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability of the VCSE sector (particularly following Covid-19). • This impact could vary between districts depending on the nature of the voluntary sector in each respective locality.	• Consider the findings of recent engagement activity with VCSE sector regarding VCSE capacity building support. • Engage with partners locally on any opportunities to further coordinate work with the VCSE sector.

		• This helps the sector to grow, remain sustainable and recovery from Covid-19.		
Crime/ Community Safety Will the proposal support a joint approach to responding to crime and addressing the causes of crime?	All	• The VCSE sector plays an important role in supporting both victims of crime as well as ex-offenders and people at risk of becoming involved in crime, including young people. • The current contract builds capacity in the VCSE sector and helps ensure these organisations receive support to remain sustainable. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would continue to provide support for these VCSE organisations, as well as those working with young people to ensure positive activities are available and accessible.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability / number of organisations that currently support these groups.	• Ensure any future VCSE support arrangements are aligned to Council priorities around Early Help, the Place Based Approach and Supportive Communities.
Educational Attainment and Training Will the proposal support school improvement and help to provide access to a good education?	Young people	• The current contract provides support for Staffordshire's youth offer, including supporting VCSE organisations that work with young people and ensuring the views of young people are heard and contribute to decision making.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability / number of organisations that currently support young people.	• Ensure any future VCSE support arrangements are aligned to Council priorities around Early Help, the Place Based Approach and the priorities of the Families and Communities transformation programme.

Will the proposal support the improved supply of skills to employers and the employability of residents?		• A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would continue to provide support for these VCSE organisations, as well as those working with young people to ensure their views are heard and contribute to decision making.		
Leisure and Culture Will the proposal encourage people to participate in social and leisure activities that they enjoy?	All	• A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would build capacity and provide support for VCSE organisations that provide leisure and culture activities that support community wellbeing and children, young people, and families.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability / number of organisations that provide this type of support for communities.	• Consider the findings of recent engagement activity with VCSE sector regarding VCSE capacity building support. • Engage with partners locally on any opportunities to further coordinate work with the VCSE sector.
Volunteering Will the proposal impact on opportunities for volunteering?	All	• The current contract provides support for volunteering. This includes helping residents that are interested in volunteering find opportunities, as well as helping VCSE organisations to recruit volunteers. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would continue to provide this support for volunteering.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the number of volunteering placements across the County.	• Consider the findings of recent engagement activity with VCSE sector regarding VCSE capacity building support. • Ensure any future VCSE support arrangements are aligned to Council's Communities Delivery Plan and approach to working volunteers.

Best Start	Children, young people, and families	• The current contract provides support for Staffordshire's children, young people, and families, including working with the local VCSE on the Council's Early Help strategy and Staffordshire's youth offer. • A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework would continue to provide support for VCSE groups working with children, young people, and families, as well as working with the Council and partners.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability / number of VCSE organisations that can provide effective support for children, young people, and families.	• Consider the findings of recent engagement activity with VCSE sector regarding VCSE capacity building support. • Ensure any future VCSE support arrangements are aligned to Council priorities around Early Help, the Place Based Approach and the priorities of the Families and Communities transformation programme.
Rural Communities Will the proposal specifically impact on rural communities?		• A new VCSE Capacity Building Framework could continue to ensure VCSE groups in each locality still receive support, including Rural Communities.	• If support for VCSE capacity building is significantly reduced / withdrawn, it could potentially have a negative impact on the sustainability / number of VCSE organisations operating in rural communities.	• Consider the findings of recent engagement activity with VCSE sector regarding VCSE capacity building support. • Engage with partners locally on any opportunities to further coordinate work with the VCSE sector.

Will the proposal impact on parental support (pre or postnatally), which helps to ensure that children are school-ready and have high aspirations, utilising a positive parenting approach?

Evidence Base: (Evidence used/ likelihood/ size of impact)

Submitting a CIA

Now transfer the main findings of this assessment to the **'Checklist and Executive Summary'** template. Then both documents need to be approved/signed off by the appropriate people. For CIAs that are going to **Cabinet**,

only the **'Checklist and Executive Summary'** will be submitted as part of the **Cabinet Papers**. The Full CIA document will be submitted as a **Background Paper**.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 16 November 2021

Impact of Covid-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress – Update October 2021 and Way Forward

Recommendations

I recommend that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

a. Notes the impact of Covid-19 on Staffordshire since October 2020

b. Notes the progress being made towards resetting the Corporate Strategy

c. Notes the progress made towards delivering the high-level priorities and plans from each recovery area

d. Endorses Staffordshire County Council's approach to the leadership, influencing and monitoring of the Recovery process moving forward

Report of Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the recommendations of the Leader of the Council and the attached report, which has been to Cabinet on 20 October 2021. Comments will be fed back to Cabinet members for their consideration.

Report

Background

2. This paper details the high-level impacts which the COVID-19 pandemic has had upon our communities, the economy and the organisation.

3. We recognised that recovery from the pandemic would not be a traditional recovery and that it would take an extended period of time and therefore this is the second paper to Cabinet.

4. This paper describes the high-level priorities which have been identified for recovery across the County Council and our continued progress against these; and it details our on-going approach to the leadership, influencing and monitoring of the recovery process moving forwards.

Link to Strategic Plan

5. This paper will inform the new strategic plan. Please refer to paragraph 10 of Impact of Covid-199 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress – Update October 2021 and Way Forward

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee received and noted a verbal update from the Leader of the Council on 3rd July 2020, with a link to the related Cabinet paper of 17th June 2020: Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Approaches.

Community Impact

7. Please see attached Community Impact Assessment (Appendix 8)

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Impact of Covid-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress – Update October 2021 and Way Forward
Appendix 1 Health and Care
Appendix 2 Families and Communities
Appendix 3 Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Appendix 4 Corporate Services
Appendix 5 Communities
Appendix 5A Libraries
Appendix 5B Children's Centres
Appendix 5C Archives and Heritage
Appendix 6 People
Appendix 7 Digital and Climate Change
Appendix 8 Community Impact Assessment
Appendix 9 Group processes and interoperability: A longitudinal case study analysis of the UK's civil contingency response to Covid-19

Contact Details

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Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 October 2021

Impact of Covid-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress – Update October 2021 and Way Forward

Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

"Since the easing of restrictions, it has been fantastic to see our schools, our businesses and our hospitality and our leisure sectors once again fully reopening their doors.

"While Covid and its legacy will be with us for some time. we must look forward to rebuilding our economy, ensuring that our children get the schooling they need and that people can once again aspire to happy, healthier and rewarding lives.

"As a county council, we remain at the forefront of managing Covid and also managing the impact it has had own our services and the communities we serve.

"The pandemic has shown Staffordshire's strengths: Our resilience, our determination and our compassions. It is also opened up new ways of smarter working which will be invaluable as we go forward with our lives."

Report Summary:

This paper details the high-level impacts which the COVID-19 pandemic has had upon our communities, the economy and the organisation.

We recognised that recovery from the pandemic would not be a traditional recovery and that it would take an extended period of time and therefore this is the third paper to Cabinet.

This paper describes the high level priorities which have been identified for recovery across the County Council and our continued progress against these; and it details our on-going approach to the leadership, influencing and monitoring of the recovery process moving forwards.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Notes the impact of Covid-19 on Staffordshire since October 2020;

b. Notes the progress being made towards resetting the Corporate Strategy;

c. Notes the progress made towards delivering the high-level priorities and plans from each recovery area; and

d. Endorses Staffordshire County Council's approach to the leadership, influencing and monitoring of the Recovery process moving forward.

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 October 2021

Impact of Covid-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress – Update October 2021 and Way Forward

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Notes the impact of Covid-19 on Staffordshire since October 2020;

b. Notes the progress being made towards resetting the Corporate Strategy;

c. Notes the progress made towards delivering the high-level priorities and plans from each recovery area; and

d. Endorses Staffordshire County Council's approach to the leadership, influencing and monitoring of the Recovery process moving forward.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. On 17th June 2020 Cabinet endorsed the Staffordshire County Council (SCC) approach to Recovery, to understanding the impact of COVID-19 on Staffordshire, and the high-level priorities and plans from each of the directorates and recovery areas (Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Approaches). An update on progress was received on 21st October 2020 (Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation – October 2020 Update).

2. Since October 2020 the prevalence of COVID-19 within our communities increased to a peak in January 2021, before an additional lockdown on 4th January had an impact; with cases increasing again from April 2021 as restrictions gradually eased, following the implementation of the government roadmap out of lockdown. The final easing of most restrictions on July 19th happened at a time of increasing case numbers and they have continued to rise across the Summer months, however, the success of the vaccination programme has meant that hospital

admissions and death rates have so far remained low. It is not the government's current intention to reimpose restrictions.

3. The Health Protection Board (HPB), required as part of the Local Outbreak Control Plan continues to oversee surveillance and management of incidents and provides support to local IMTs addressing specific outbreaks within our communities. Alongside this, the Member-led Local Outbreak Control Board ensures democratic oversight of the Local Outbreak Control Plan development and the management of incidents overall and individually. It also leads communication with communities about the overall management of incidents.

4. It is acknowledged that moving forwards society will have to learn to live with COVID-19 and the council has an approach to doing this, with some thoughts on likely short – medium term scenarios, organisation and societal impact, and learning and considerations to take forward as we recover, discussed in the paper Living with COVID-19 (Richard Harling, July 2021).

5. The SCC COVID Defence Force will be maintained, focussed on the priorities of testing, contact tracing and outbreak management for at least the remainder of 2021/22 and possibly longer term with the duration and capacity greater in more worse cases scenarios, and there is funding to support this.

6. Although government restrictions have tightened and eased over the first half of 2021, progress has been made across SCC towards organisation and service recovery. This has been managed through existing governance structures and overseen by the Planning and Recovery Group (PRG) as restrictions eased between March and July 2021. We have endeavoured to ensure that our services remain open wherever possible, so that we can continue to support our residents, communities, and businesses.

7. As Lockdown restrictions were removed in July 2021 moving forward, we need to manage recovery where it falls to SCC to do so, influence others where this is appropriate and monitor the situation so that we are able to respond quickly, if needed, to any changes and to ultimately ensure recovery progresses for our residents, communities and organisations.

Understanding the Impact of COVID-19

8. Coronavirus COVID-19 continues to circulate around the world and in the UK. As of 15th September 2021, there have been over 225 million confirmed cases and more than 4.5 million deaths globally, with over 7 million confirmed cases and almost 155,000 deaths in the UK.

9. Case rates in the UK and locally, are rising, as social distancing restrictions have been relaxed. Hospitalisations have plateaued, and remain considerably lower than during previous peaks, as a direct result of the vaccine programme. As at 11th September 2021, Staffordshire recorded a 7-day rate per 100,000 population of 366.0, higher than the national figure (285.6) and the regional figure (319.9).

Resetting the Corporate Strategy

10. Following the May 2021 elections, work to develop the Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2022-26 is underway and will continue throughout the Summer and Autumn. This work has been informed by both the response to COVID-19 and our recovery process, the completed plan and financial strategy will be considered by Cabinet and Full Council in early 2022.

Priorities for Recovery

11. As detailed in the June 2020 and October 2020 Cabinet papers, each directorate is leading recovery for its own area, and recovery which cuts across all the directorates is being led through recovery groups linked to the four principles – communities, digital, people and climate change.

12. Detailed progress against the priorities for each directorate and corporate principles groups, alongside an updated Community Impact Assessment are appended:

   a. Appendix 1 Health and Care
   b. Appendix 2 Families and Communities
   c. Appendix 3 Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
   d. Appendix 4 Corporate Services
   e. Appendix 5 Communities
   f. Appendix 5A Libraries
   g. Appendix 5B Children's Centres
   h. Appendix 5C Archives and Heritage
   i. Appendix 6 People
   j. Appendix 7 Digital and Climate Change
   k. Appendix 8 Community Impact Assessment

SCC management, influencing and monitoring of the recovery process moving forward

13. As we emerge from lockdown restrictions the Local Authority has stepped back from some of the direct support provided to our communities and businesses during the pandemic. However, there is still a need to manage

some service specific elements of recovery, to monitor some key data sets to understand where additional intervention might be required, and to support and influence the local economy, our communities and partners as we learn to live with COVID-19.

14. Tabulated below are summaries which demonstrate how we intend to do this across SCC directorates and corporately.

a. Health and Social Care

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Health and Social Care		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
ASC Manage increased flexible working including video and telephone social care assessments Levels of referrals and ensure prioritisation of those at greatest risk		
Care Commissioning Ensure care market resilience through provision of advice to care providers around infection prevention and control Distribute government grant funding related to COVID Alternatives to building based day services and replacement care	**Care Commissioning** Monitor market to identify trends and future capacity requirements, especially care homes	**Care Commissioning** Working with NHS to improve urgent care and to prepare for winter 2021/22 Promote the value of the care workforce alongside NHS
In-house Learning Disability Provider Services	**In-house Learning Disability Provider Services** Best practice guidance and regulations	**In-house Learning Disability Provider Services** Promote SCC in-house services as a social

New ways of providing support including remote electronic interactions	regarding COVID-safe practice across a range of regulated and non-regulated settings.	care employer of choice, encouraging the social care industry as a positive choice for young people.
Ongoing infection control, testing and vaccine compliance to reduce risks of outbreaks in services.	Monitor market demands for flexible, integrated services, provided in the community.	Be an industry leader in COVID-safe practice.
Public Health COVID response and outbreak management Manage initiatives to increase support for stop smoking services, alcohol treatment services, mental wellbeing and resilience, healthy lifestyles, and workplace health Continue to implement the Supportive Communities plan agreed in Feb. COVID outbreak management	**Public Health** Monitor trends in cases of COVID, hospital admissions, vaccination uptake and variants of concern. Monitor community activity and assets, and build on the success of the Supportive Communities initiatives	**Public Health** Influence the public to healthier lifestyles through a program focussed on obesity Work with partners to provide a more joined up approach to people with multiple complex challenges. Enable and support further development of community assets and strengths-based care.

b. Families and Communities

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Children and Families (Communities in a separate section below)		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
Workforce Consistency of services, maximising virtual opportunities whilst maintaining face to face contact where required	**Workforce** Staff welfare Offering a blend approach to returning to the workplace from 1st Oct,	**Workforce** Promote well-being services and online e-learning.

Virtual training for workforce and support for newly qualified social workers Manage returning to the office where possible to improve emotional support available to staff, for new staff to receive practical support and to ensure teams able to deliver the aims and objectives of the transformation	ensuring risk assessments in place for most vulnerable. Monitoring staffing levels and consider contingency around flu season.	
	Youth Offending Service Numbers of children and backlog in courts now at normal levels. The YOS Management Board will continue to monitor.	
Education Solutions for emotionally based school refusals which have increased during COVID Manage increased demand for attachment and trauma training for schools Ensure Personal Education Planning completion rates recover to pre-pandemic levels for children in care Implement new duties from DfE for Virtual School Headteacher from September 2021	**Education** Monitor school attendance, linked to both increased numbers being educated at home and some families failing to return children to school Attendance patterns across different ages and phases of statutory education Monitor permanent exclusions and the reasons. Virtual School overseeing a COVID recovery plan to	**Education** The return of face to face alternative provision The use of restorative practice in schools in response to fixed term and permanent exclusion The use of the graduated response in education settings to support the social, emotional, and mental health and other needs of children and young people

Provide advice to schools and education settings upon the actions required when implementing COVID-19 outbreak management plans	minimise the impact of gaps in learning on attainment and progress	Provision of effective support in terms of Local Outbreak management and clear advice and guidance to settings to reduce and help manage/reduce COVID disruption to education. Effective planning of the roll out of the 2021 Flu vaccination and 12-15-year-old COVID -19 vaccination plans Influence education settings to have effective Outbreak Management plans
Children with Disabilities Establish a dynamic purchasing scheme to attract new entrants and increase market capacity and availability of urgent care packages. New contracts live April 2022	**Children with Disabilities** Monitor impact of dynamic purchasing scheme on children's disability care market	**Children with Disabilities** Influence the market through establishing a dynamic purchasing scheme Influence schools and providers to ensure children with disabilities able to access all aspects of their support packages
Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Manage the provision of support sessions in schools and communities to address increased demand across the CAMHS system Focus on early years and staff wellbeing as part of the DfE second phase Wellbeing for Education Recovery		**Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health** Work with partners to influence policy and planning across the system

Domestic Abuse Continue to work with partner commissioning organisations and the provider (New Era) for the domestic abuse contract to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on service delivery and to enable increased provision to address increased demand.	**Domestic Abuse** Monitor demand on provider	
Children's Social Care Manage numbers of Children in Care – identifying difficulties with shortage of placements that meet the needs of the most complex, and increased costs Manage increased numbers of Children with Disabilities on the edge of care entering care due to reduced school attendance, reduced health support, reduced availability of respite and home care. Continue to manage increase in prevention referrals to YOS. Continue to manage the increased numbers of children in care due to court closures and timescales to complete proceedings	**Children's Social Care** Monitor number and nature of referrals to ensure the right support Social workers in schools to monitor this cohort of children Court delays. Prepare for changes post 1st Oct	**Children's Social Care** Provide advice and support to Tier Two providers (Early Help) to manage backlogs and address areas of concern Utilisation of in-house resources to provide creative support. Dynamic purchasing in place/Home to support agencies support children remaining at home Health and safety review of current arrangements beyond 1st Oct Influence Partners in the wider children and families' system to

| Manage family time arrangements with reduced building capacity until October 1st and convening foster career support groups.

Ensure Business Continuity Plans are up to date and have actions to mitigate against risks. | | support through earliest help |

c. Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills		
Manage	Monitor	Influence
Review the existing Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy agreed by Cabinet in June 2020, and related strategic priorities.	Monitor the current state of the Staffordshire economy to ensure we support and develop the economy further - % on government support; Universal Credit claimant count; numbers on furlough; job vacancies; skills shortages	Influence partners and businesses to capitalise on the opportunities that have arisen, to hasten the development of the Staffordshire economy and to support business to thrive
Manage the Staffordshire Means Back to Business (Additional Restrictions Grant) programme, launched in April 2021 to deliver against the Strategy through four workstreams	Through the Programme board consider delivery statistics monthly working with our Districts and Boroughs to ensure programmes are effectively implemented across the County.	Work with the private sector to ensure the Programme remains up to date and effective.
Deliver the i54 Western Extension site, to be largely complete July 2021	Monitor job creating announcements in Staffordshire	Support the Districts and Boroughs through enhanced 2 tier working in the delivery of their Town Deal and Future High Street

Ensure the County is well positioned to benefit from programmes being developed by central government including Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Funding		Fund Programmes to promote job growth and activity in our urban centres. Infrastructure led growth to ensure as our economy recovers and thrives, we have the infrastructure to support communities as a result of economic growth.

d. Corporate Services

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Corporate Services		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
Registration Service Manage the backlog of wedding ceremonies and related increased admin work to remove backlog **Governance** Ensure voting meetings are held physically following the repeal of emergency legislation Review Governance, updating as and when necessary along with communication of changes **Legal** **IMT** Manage the return of team members supporting IMT to their substantive roles		**Governance** We will continue to make the best use of technology whilst adhering to the relevant legislation. We will work with organisations such as LGA and LLG to lobby Government to allow for the use of virtual attendance at Committee meetings.

Workflow Realigning staff who had been tasked to provide support on COVID Regulations.	**Workflow** Changes in statutory obligations or requirements in relation to specific subject areas that impact on legal practice.	
Transformation Project Legal support and guidance support to the children's system transformation	**Transformation Project** Monitor legal risks arising as a direct or indirect consequence of the project.	
Backlogs Support to F&C and H&C and Court system to address remaining backlogs		**Backlogs** Continue to liaise with HMCTS and key partner agencies to highlight and propose developments and solutions to the backlog.
Property Support to property on building additional housing and capital receipts and realisation of assets, work which did not reduce during the pandemic		
Emergency Planning/Response Respond to COVID-19 and evaluate the impact across service delivery, including community and citizens' impact	**Emergency Planning/Response** Monitor resource resilience and ability to respond to concurrent or major incidents Review and monitor BCPs and ability to respond during COVID – critical services list Monitor Staffordshire uptake to vaccination programme, SCC and	**Emergency Planning/Response** National resilience Strategy - call for evidence National 'big resilience Conversation' – post COVID Civil Contingencies Act consultation LRF roles, responsibilities and Structures (inc funding)

	provider staff to ensure continuity of service	– multiagency response and recovery
	Monitor and evaluate new risks eg Cyber and ensure relevant plans to mitigate risk(s)	National risk & resilience planning, assurance and governance
Property Manage the development of Shire Hall in Stafford Support and respond to COVID-19 building control and changing ventilation standards and new workplace guidance.	**Property** Monitor compliance and implement revised controls to premises where needs identified	
Policy & Insight Process and analyse a wide variety of information related to COVID-19 to enable Staffordshire to identify and respond rapidly to outbreaks	**Policy & Insight** Monitor data sets to ensure rapid response if needed to changing COVID situations	**Policy & Insight** Dashboards shared with Local Resilience Forum to enable evidence-based decision making across Staffordshire.
Customer Services Manage the dedicated phoneline to support the public with IAG to improve isolation compliance Streamline processes to release support to support Local Outbreak Control and other parts of SCC Continue new ways of working employed through pandemic as	**Customer Services** Monitor demand across all services. Current trends demonstrate that some service area demand is higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019	**Customer Services** Working with partners internally to influence the Customer Journey

normal services resumes and demand increases **People Services** Ensure suitable resources available to effectively deal with the People Response and recovery requirements (see section and link to the People section) Ensure that our people policies, processes and procedures reflect and support our new ways of working Ensure that we can provide the appropriate people focused data and insight to inform business needs and decisions Ensure that our SMART working vision supports our new ways of working following COVID-19 Ensure that we develop an ambitious vision for SMART working based on the experiences that COVID-19 has provided us Ensure that we use opportunities post COVID-19 to increase our ability to work agile effectively	**People Services** That the people strategy priorities support organisation through living with COVID	**People Services** Workforce planning for long term needs to ensure COVID does not impact organisational performance Influence a new culture for the organisation where SMART is embedded in the way people work, buildings are configured around activity undertaken and technology supports this approach SMART is how we work ensuring the needs of the business come first

e. Communities

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Communities		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
Libraries Fully operational services with ongoing COVID-secure environments to keep staff and customers safe, subject to further review Phase in regular activity programmes Re-introduce soft furnishings and toilet access with Zoono Cleaning in place Support and enable the return of IT Buddies	**Libraries** Monitor PC use to increase availability where possible. Monitor number of people attending events and activities, increasing capacity in line with social distancing guidelines. Consider when to reintroduce overdue charges. Monitor the impact of COVID-19 on income for the service.	**Libraries** Work with partner organisations to encourage Community Managed Libraries to recover their library offer and ensure a consistent approach across Staffordshire. An update on SCC Libraries recovery will be submitted to DCMS by October 8th
Children's Centres Provision of Childcare, Family Time and health and wellbeing appointments, in line with government guidance. The Early Years Coordination Service continues to facilitate a virtual offer which is supported by a broader Family Hub Offer	**Children's Centres** H&S site visits been carried out. H&S advice is to maintain low numbers and social distancing which is impacting on recovery	
Archives and Heritage Increase capacity for onsite visitors and volunteers from 1st October.	**Archives and Heritage** Monitor occupancy rates in visitor spaces, the increase of capacity with social distancing guidelines, and the	**Archives and Heritage** Work with other local authority archive services through Chief Archivists in Local

Recover small scale onsite events and workshops.

Continue to promote onsite and remote volunteer offer. Promote digital offer and online events, and remote copying/research services to offset income shortfalls.

Recruit Project Officer for Pandemic War Diary project to record the corporate response to COVID-19 | impact of COVID-19 on income for the service | Government Group to influence continued recovery of services. |
| **Rural**
Availability of contract cleaners to enable public toilet provision

Explore how to restore volunteering on public rights of way network, transport impacting on service delivery

Resume meeting provision at Chasewater Innovation Centre and at leased buildings though capacity remains reduced

Trading Standards
Manage COVID-19 related enforcement and prevention activities where applicable

Support to premises owners for return of | **Rural**
Monitoring numbers at Chasewater Innovation Centre and leased buildings with reduced capacity and impact on service | **Rural**
Working with parishes and user groups on local schemes where possible to achieve volunteering outcomes |

spectators at sporting events Coroners inquests continue to be held, making use of digital facilities with limited attendees in person and remote access for most. Inquests requiring a jury are taking place making use of the County Council Chamber.		
E,I&S Community Work Resumption of road safety education Manage the increased workloads due to impact of isolation on school transport Manage restrictions at Household Waste Recycling Sites To help maintain the substantial rise in walking and cycling levels during the pandemic, all opportunities are being taken to secure funding to provide permanent improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure, in line with the 2021 version of Staffordshire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)	**Road Safety Education** Monitor the opportunities to deliver in schools and the take up of new digital resources	**Road Safety Education** Continued engagement with priority schools to prioritise delivery of in-school activities

Supportive Communities & Volunteering		Supportive Communities & Volunteering
Manage dissemination of grant to VCSE groups to support groups reopening post COVID		Through the Volunteering Task and Finish Group, influence residents and staff to increase the number of volunteers
Roll out Community Champions approach to other localities		
Adapt the Do-It volunteering platform to ensure sustainability		
Manage the new Volunteering Task and Finish Group to increase the number of volunteers into key service areas impacted by COVID-19, review the offer for volunteers and internal policies		

f. People

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
People		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
Continue to manage local outbreaks through the current third wave of the pandemic both for Core Workforce and Education and Early Years	Monitor building occupancy to ensure staff comfort and safety and SMART working	Positively influence the wellbeing of staff through Lifting Lockdown Implementation Plan & Winter impacts to manage anxieties, and communications – webinars, online mental health training, wellbeing offer
Retain current COVID building arrangements until end Sept 2021 and complete a review and recommendations in line	Monitor Outbreaks in workplaces/educational settings and ensure effective response and learning. Monitor ventilation levels through Premises Managers and respond	From October 2021 positively influence the

with the Governments Winter Plan update.

Implementation of new Ventilation to manage delta variant and complete required workplace C02 monitoring. Manage outcomes with support from Strategic Property.

Ongoing communication with staff around SMART working

Review using space differently in SP1 to support SMART working

Complete HSW refresher training for Fire Marshalls, Evacuation Chair use etc

Launch effective vaccination Policy to effectively ensure legal compliance with regulation to ensure all employees that work in or attend a CQC registered care home are fully vaccinated/hold valid exemption by 11th Nov.

Revise Wellbeing Strategy in October 2021, tailored to the changing needs of staff and new ways of working | effectively to any risks identified.

Monitor that employees required to be fully vaccinated/hold valid exemption is in place to ensure compliance on the 11th November.

Monitor consultation on the widening of employee groups that may form part of the requirement for COVID 19 vaccination for deployment in role, allowing effective planning.

Monitor H&S standards are maintained across the organisation | wellbeing of staff through implementing a revised Wellbeing Strategy tailored to the changing needs of staff and new ways of working.

Influence effective management and planning of the 12-15-year pupil COVID 19 vaccination

Influence through effective education, encouragement, and support workforce to be fully vaccinated especial frontline and care staff. Including booster vaccination as they become eligible.

Influence employees to be winter resilient by accessing Flu vaccinations to support protection of vulnerable service users and residents of Staffordshire and support our own Business continuity arrangements |

Effective Flu vaccination programme for SCC and Education Workforce		

g. Digital

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Digital		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
Ongoing development of our digital programme, which will reflect the 'living with COVID' world we now find ourselves in.		

h. Climate Change

Staffordshire County Council Role in Recovery from COVID-19 Moving Forwards		
Climate		
Manage	**Monitor**	**Influence**
Development of a blueprint to help shape and describe the road to net carbon zero for Staffordshire		Influence Staffordshire Business Environmental Network to drive forward a green-led recovery conversation

A Pandemic "War Diary" and Lockdown Memories

15. Two projects have been developed by the Archive and Heritage Service which will become the corporate and community record/ memory of COVID-19 for Staffordshire. Their purpose is:

    a. To capture the official record of Staffordshire County Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic which will be transferred to the Archive and Heritage Service as a resource for future research.
    b. An oral history project to capture the experience of members and officers during the pandemic.
    c. A publicly accessible book/brochure to share the story of how SCC managed the response and create a lasting legacy.

d. Use the Lockdown Memories project which is capturing the community response to COVID-19 to provide additional information and context for the formal record.

16. The intention is to publish a book which will detail how SCC managed the response by March 2023 and deliver a Lockdown Memories exhibition at the Staffordshire History Centre between March and June 2024.

Director of Public Health Report

17. The Director of Public Health Report is an annual independent report by the Director of Public Health. This year's report is entitled "COVID-19 in Staffordshire: Impact and Opportunities" and reviews the pandemic from March 2020 up until the last easing of restrictions on 19 July 2021.

18. The report, which will also inform the Pandemic 'War Diary', details how Staffordshire has been affected by COVID-19, the SCC response and what we have learned which we can build upon. It is anticipated the report will be formally available by October 31st, 2021. A presentation has been delivered to the Health and Wellbeing Board, and it is intended that this report will lead the way for the JSNA, which will build our knowledge about the longer term impact so of COVID-19; and for a refreshed Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which will seek to articulate a strategic response for the next 3-5 years.

Finances - Impact on MTFS

2020/21

County Council Financial Outturn

19. Since the 2020/21 budget was set, COVID-19 has become a global pandemic requiring a combined response from public sector services and which is also having a severe impact on the economy. Central Government have issued four payments of general grant to local authorities, plus grant to compensate for lost income, totalling £48.6m for Staffordshire. This has enabled SCC to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services during the pandemic while protecting both workforce and residents.

20. The table below sets out the outturn of additional costs relating to the pandemic, plus lost income and delayed savings caused by the crisis. This can be funded by the government grant provided.

	£m
Additional Costs	35.407
Lost income	2.680
Delayed savings	3.940
Sales, Fees & Charges Grant	(1.733)
Grant funding	(46.896)
Carried forward into 21/22	(6.602)

There were £0.680m of costs incurred in 2019/20 which have been funded from the grant.

21. All grants received by Staffordshire County Council regarding COVID 19 in 2020/21 are listed below. The General COVID Grant can be used for all spend, the remaining grants are specific and go directly to services, the majority of which are paid out to suppliers. As the pandemic is having an impact across more than one financial year, some of the grants below will be carried forward into 2021/22 and are committed to fund the County Council's continuing response.

	£m
General COVID Grant Funding (incl. SFC grant)	46.896
Test and Trace	8.233
Adult Social Care Infection Control	18.183
Lateral Flow Testing in Care Homes	2.463
Workforce Capacity Adult Social Care	1.771
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	1.094
Food and Essential Supplies	0.823
Home to School Transport	0.661
COVID Winter Grant	2.316
Sales, Fees and Charges Funding	1.733
Contain Outbreak Management	22.114
Local Transport Authority Grant	0.314
Adoption Support Fund	0.225
Growth Hub	0.873
Schools Fund	0.644
Catch Up Premium	1.872
Mental Health Support	0.138
Other	0.332
Total	**110.685**

22. In addition, a contribution of £5m has been made from the COVID-19 grant to the Local Taxation Loss Reserve which will be used to smooth

out the impact of the pandemic on local taxation in future years. This will be used to fund the 25% of lost local taxation which is not being funded by the government, in addition to other impacts such as reductions in tax base.

23. The county council has managed its response to the pandemic in a range of different ways. Some of this has been by diverting resources from planned activities to supporting the outbreak. In other instances, additional resource capacity has been brought in to assist. Specific use of third sector support has also been facilitated by the additional grant funding. Additional costs have been incurred in a range of areas including:

    a. setting up vaccination centres
    b. additional transport costs
    c. supply of food
    d. supply of essential protective equipment
    e. additional cleaning services
    f. testing and tracing response
    g. waste disposal arrangements; etc.

24. Services have also suffered from reduced income levels from fees and charges as activity has been curtailed or stopped due to the restrictions and measures in place to control the virus.

25. There has also been a significant impact on planned cost reduction programmes which have been delayed due to the need to divert staff and resources to COVID response activities or have been delayed due to external factors such as the closure of the courts services. Many of the delays impact over multiple financial years.

26. Of particular concern is the uncertainty about the longer-term impact of the pandemic on the care market, which has resulted in higher costs and loss of income for providers, will continue for the foreseeable future. The latest funding settlement for Local Authorities was only for one financial year and there is a risk around future government allocations, particularly considering the significant grant funding provided to tackle COVID-19. Furthermore, and as described in paragraph 4 and Appendix 1 the latest indications are that society will be living with the virus for much longer than had initially been anticipated.

27. There have also been some delays in delivering aspects of the Capital Programme however it is pleasing to note that a final outturn of £132m is broadly at levels experienced prior to the pandemic.

2021/22 and beyond

28. In the current financial year funding levels provide some stability to continue the recovery work and provide some capability to fund further response activity as and when the need arises. Latest forecasts suggest that the council will manage within existing budgets (as supplemented with COVID-19 grant) for the 2021/22 financial year

29. However future years are much more uncertain. Prior to the pandemic there were a range of 'unknowns' which included the 2020 Spending Review, The Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Retention, Adults Social Care Green Paper, reforms of schools funding and SEND and it is still not known when these reviews will begin.

30. This lack of clarity makes longer term financial planning extremely difficult, and in some cases impossible; these issues have not gone away because of COVID-19. In fact, the current crisis has added some additional problems notable around council tax and business rates collections as well as having a significant impact on income from fees and charges and cost reduction programmes that councils are delivering to balance their budgets.

31. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the funding issues facing local government and the care sector. Through a combination of a huge local effort and non-recurrent funding we have been able to mount a successful response, limit the number of cases, and maintain care and support for vulnerable people. This is not sustainable without a longer-term funding settlement. Local government has been living 'hand to mouth' for years and this has prevented us from being able to make the long-term investments in the care sector. Without sustainable funding the care sector will remain fragile and will not be resilient to future emergencies.

32. This level of uncertainty does mean that SCC should ensure that it maintains suitable flexibility in its plans, funding decisions and unallocated reserves to help it respond to events as they unfold. It remains imperative that the £62m cost reduction programme is delivered.

33. We must as part of our overall strategy continue to work closely with government to identify solutions to the current problems, however it seems likely that difficult decisions lie ahead particularly with regard to the total quantum of funding that the sector has identified that it requires to deliver what our residents need.

Risks Identified

34. There is a risk that COVID-19 may re-emerge, either through a new variant or decreasing vaccination immunity levels, and this will impact upon our recovery timescales, dependent on the nature and scale of the outbreaks, and whether this results in local or national lockdowns. Planning for Living with COVID-19 has been considered and a paper was presented to SLT in July 2021.

35. The risk to SCC's finances and MTFS remains, as the costs of recovery and potential of further outbreaks are currently unknown, linked to unknown increased demand, future funds, and funding settlements from central government.

36. There is a risk that the response and recovery of individual partners may inadvertently negatively impact the SCC's plans.

37. There is a risk that individual partners recover in silos, reducing the likelihood of improved future public sector provision.

38. There is a risk that SCC does not take the learning from the response and recovery to date, and transformation programmes are limited as a result.

39. There is a wider social impact risk from COVID-19 on residents' individual finances and mental health, which may mean SCC will have to intervene more actively to support our residents and wider communities.

Continued Leadership and Management of Recovery

40. The SCC Planning and Recovery Group (PRG) was reinstated in March 2021 to oversee the easing of restrictions from the January 2021 lockdown and the related recovery to services and support for communities.

41. Given the significant progress to date and acknowledging both the length of time we can reasonably expect recovery to take, and the existing governance structures used to monitor delivery against plans, it is proposed again to stand down the PRG and manage recovery through business as usual channels.

42. Recovery Groups within Directorates will remain for as long as coordination of activity is required and be managed through the existing governance structures. Decisions which require escalation will be taken

to SLT as usual. Data monitoring will continue through the Insight Team as part of the Local Outbreak Plan.

43. A small planning and recovery team led by the Director for Corporate Services will continue to meet regularly to coordinate any SCC-wide recovery which may be required.

44. The partnership Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) is now scheduled to meet every month rather than every two weeks, meeting only if there is something specific to discuss. It will remain in operation for as long as the Staffordshire Resilience Forum, advised by the RCG, considers it necessary.

45. A study by Keele University (Appendix 9: Group processes and interoperability: A longitudinal case study analysis of the UK's civil contingency response to Covid-19) in which the Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) Chair, SCC Director for Health and Care and other colleagues participated, has provided a reflective examination of the response to COVID-19 in Staffordshire linked to the national situation and central government guidance, and provides key learnings for partners locally and nationally moving forward.

Legal Implications

46. There are no specific legal implications to report at this stage.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

47. Please refer to Finance section above (paras 19 - 33).

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 Health and Care
Appendix 2 Families and Communities
Appendix 3 Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Appendix 4 Corporate Services
Appendix 5 Communities
Appendix 5A Libraries
Appendix 5B Children's Centres
Appendix 5C Archives and Heritage
Appendix 6 People
Appendix 7 Digital and Climate Change
Appendix 8 Community Impact Assessment
Appendix 9 Group processes and interoperability: A longitudinal case study
         analysis of the UK's civil contingency response to Covid-19

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Appendix 1

Heath and Social Care

Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care & Safeguarding:

a)   Increased flexible and mobile working. We continue to operate video and telephone social care assessments and reviews to enable staff to work flexibly, whilst also supporting staff to complete assessments face to face safely where this is required.

b)   We have Harnessed the improved ways of working that were evident during the pandemic response, including First Contact continuing to complete assessments quickly and effectively.

c)   Impact on referrals: We continue to see high levels of referrals across our services, and will continue to monitor these levels of demand and prioritise individuals at greatest risk

Care Commissioning:

d)   Recover operations: Our brokers continue to support our colleagues in adult social work as they respond to high levels of referrals. Together with our colleagues in MPFT adult social work, we have completed reviews of patients who were placed by the NHS into temporary accommodation during the first phase of Covid-19, and arranged ongoing placements as appropriate

e)   Improve urgent care. We are continuing to support the NHS to minimise unnecessary emergency admissions to hospital and facilitate timely discharge and we are working with the NHS to prepare for winter 2021/22

f)   Ensure care market resilience. We continue to provide advice to care providers about infection prevention and control, PPE, social distancing and 'shielding', and 'test and trace', as part of our COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan. We have continued to distribute government grant funding for infection control and testing. We have also worked closely with the NHS and the care market to promote vaccination of care home residents and staff (ahead of legislative requirements for staff in care homes to be vaccinated). We continue to promote the value of the care workforce alongside the NHS

g)   Review the care market. We continue to monitor the care market to identify trends and we have progressed a review of future market capacity requirements in the context of the impact of COVID-19 on the care sector, especially care homes. We continue to trial alternatives to building based day services and replacement care where appropriate to ensure support in the context of enhanced requirements for hygiene and social distancing.

In-house learning disability provider services:

h)   We have developed new ways of providing support in the context of enhanced requirements for hygiene and social distancing, including the use of remote electronic interactions.

i)   Finally, there is a need to acknowledge the impact the past year have had on our workforce and those working in the wider care sector and we continue to provide effective support through what has been, and may continue to be, a challenging period.

Public Health

The 19th July has seen the removal of most restrictions in England, however as cases continue to rise in the country and in Staffordshire, SCC and its partners continue to have a significant role to play in minimising ongoing transmission by managing outbreaks, contact tracing, communications and community insight and supporting the ongoing vaccination programme.

Public Health has implemented a range of interventions to improve those health behaviours that are associated with COVID-19 risks and those problems that stem from the restrictions in place to manage the pandemic, including:

a. Obesity – excess weight is associated with poorer health for people catching COVID-19. We have therefore initiated a long term programme designed to help people achieve a healthy weight that involves stakeholders from a range of different organisations. The plan is for partners to come together to explore how resources can be better used to encourage people to eat a healthier diet and take more exercise. A number of communications campaigns have already been delivered to provide people the information they need to lose weight and a range of projects will be delivered during 2021/22 and beyond.

b. Smoking – similarly, people who smoke often have greater health complications associated with COVID-19. We have therefore significantly increased the size of the stop smoking services in order to support more people to quit.

c. Alcohol – there is some evidence of people drinking more during the pandemic, not necessarily at the most problematic rates but at levels that are detrimental to health. We have therefore relaxed the eligibility criteria for alcohol treatment services to enable more people to received support.

d. Mental wellbeing/ social isolation – many people have struggled with the social restrictions put in place during the pandemic. We have therefore implemented a range of approaches to help people improve their wellbeing – not least through digital ways of connecting people socially.

e. Complex cases – the pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities of those people with multiple complex challenges, such as rough sleeping, addiction and mental illness. We are working with partners to provide a more joined up approach and have recruited new staff to support this client group.

f. Workplace health – businesses have suffered enormously through-out the pandemic. We have therefore developed a programme to enable employers to offer their staff access to resources to enable people to improve their health and reduce absenteeism.

Supportive Communities

In November 2020 Cabinet endorsed an updated Supportive Communities plan and the Supportive Communities priorities for 2021/22 were agreed in February 2021. Since October 2020 the following activity has been undertaken to support recovery:

a. Digital

   i. Launched a refreshed web based digital offer to ensure that older adults and people with additional needs had the knowledge and resources to support themselves at home.

   ii. Enhanced this offer through the delivery of targeted Coronavirus Information pages, the HealthApp finder, and the Do It Staffordshire volunteering platform to help people stay safe and well as they self-isolated.

   iii. Designed with practitioners the At Home platform, a virtual house that showcase aids and gadgets easily through commercial outlets that supports independence at home

b. Workforce

   i. Supported operational teams, including First Contact and area-based practitioner teams, to utilise new and existing digital resources. Identified and trained 46 digital and Assistive Technology Champions with representation across the adult social care operational teams

   ii. Facilitated, in partnership with Support Staffordshire, 56 Supportive Communities training sessions aimed at enhancing skills and providing a comprehensive toolkit covering: signposting and resources; communication and safeguarding; assistive technology and digital skills; COVID myth busting

c. Communities

   i. Worked closely with partners, including the voluntary sector, to ensure vulnerable citizens (including the clinically extremely vulnerable) had access to the support they needed through the lockdown.

   ii. Supported 1350 Staffordshire residents to step up to volunteer through the iCare and iCount campaigns.

   iii. Provided our communities with information, advice and guidance and linked them to voluntary and local community resources.

iv. Supported 149 Mutual Aid Groups to step up during the Covid-19 pandemic to support their communities with varying local offers, through effective relationships with our partners (including local anchor organisations).

v. In October 2020 launched 18 Community Help Points in trusted venues in local communities e.g. libraries and community venues. These provide a non-digital offer information, advice, and guidance and to actively signpost to very local community assets

vi. A new way of connecting and engaging with communities was developed to tackle fake news linked to Covid and to increase the uptake of the Covid vaccine in the Burton area. The Community Champions programme recruited 50 voices with a reach of over 1,000 people from the Burton community. This included local community representative, individuals, VCSE, Public and private sector. This group has successfully targeted two-way communication resulting in an increase in Covid compliance and vaccine uptake. The plan is to roll this engagement model and approach to other localities

vii. Disseminated £200k grant funding to support local community groups to stay open and deliver a level of provision between January to June 2021. In addition, a further £50k in small grants is being disseminated by Support Staffordshire Locality Officers. This also includes training, advice, and support for groups to 'open-up' post Covid

viii. There have been several successful campaigns using the nudge theory approach to help tackle some of the potential negative impacts of Covid for example the Happy At Home Christmas gifting campaign and the Let's beat Loneliness Together campaign

Appendix 2

Families and Communities (see Appendices 5, 5A, 5B and 5C for Communities)

Families and Communities have a number of recovery workstreams covering the full spectrum of services, these include:
- Workforce
- Youth Offending Service
- Education
- Children with a disability
- Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health
- Children Social Care

Each of the workstreams has monitored the impact on the services they deliver and the children and families we service and have workplans in place that outline the arrangements in place to mitigate the impact and to recover services to pre-COVID levels.

Workforce:

The numbers of colleagues available for work has remained consistent however there has been a recent increase in sickness and leavers compounded by challenges recruiting agency social workers to support. Despite this, we have continued wherever possible to provide consistency of services for children and families across Staffordshire with some aspects still being delivered through virtually. The recovery plan covering areas of the service is addressing the plan to move into a new way of working maximising virtual opportunities whilst maintaining face to face relationship-based contact where required. The children's system transformation is now progressing alongside the COVID recovery planning and as such the impact on the workforce across each area cannot be separated.

The wellbeing of the workforce remains high priority with team managers discussing the impact of COVID in supervision and one to one sessions. Additionally, self-care workshops continue to be delivered to colleagues from workforce development to support this. In the recent children and families health check, 78% stated that their wellbeing is important to their manager and within the national social work health check which compares our responses against the LGA Standards for Employers of Social Workers we scored above both regional and national averages for our support for social workers during COVID.

The training offer continues largely to be delivered virtually however with some training now taking place face to face in a COVID safe manner where appropriate – in February 85% of the children and families workforce responding to the health check confirmed they find virtual training easier to attend and would like this to continue. The programme of support for newly qualified social workers has been redesigned to take into account the experiences of new workers during their training and will now include face to face support in small groups. Similarly, development of the student programme has also been progressed to ensure we continue to offer high quality student placements supporting Staffordshire County Council as a learning organisation alongside developing our recruitment strategy.

Youth Offending Service:

The numbers of children known to the YOS is now up to expected levels and the backlog in courts has now reduced to normal levels. The YOS Management Board have included 'Learning from COVID' within the Annual Youth Justice Plan and will be monitoring full recovery through the quarterly Board meetings

Education:

There has been a rise in emotionally based school refusal, in some children this is new and for others this has become more entrenched over the last few months. We have had a session with the EP service to review how we can use the graduated response toolkit on emotionally based school refusal. The Virtual School EP is leading solution circles to look at solutions for individual children.

There has been a large increase in demand for attachment and trauma training for schools.

There has been a dip in Personal Education Planning (PEP) completion rates 84% in the Spring Term compared to 96% in Spring 2020 due to impact of social worker shortages and case load pressures. Where PEPs are being completed, we are seeing a rise in quality in all key stages of education e.g. PEPs rated good or outstanding rose from 57% in Spring 2020 to 83% in Spring 2021. This reflects the training and focus on PEP quality.

We have seen increasing numbers of children being educated at home due to closure of bubbles in schools. We had 94% attendance at the start of the summer term and we currently have 84% attendance.

Recovery for children in care will focus on ensuring that PEP completion rates are back to their pre-pandemic levels however given the benefits of on-line PEPs we will continue to have a mixture of face to face and online meetings. Children in care have been consulted in the development of a policy for future PEP meetings.

The governing body of the Virtual School is overseeing a COVID recovery plan with a view to minimising the impact of gaps in learning on attainment and progress. The Governing Body has also specifically focused resource in supporting early years and post 16 children where we had seen some dip in uptake of early years provision and an increase in the number of children not in Education Training or Employment.

As part of the DfE response to the Children in Need Review and the impact of the pandemic on children with a social care involvement, a set of new duties have been announced for the Virtual Head with the expectation that they are implemented from September 2021.

The VHT will be expected to
  - ➢ **be a strategic leader**
  - ➢ **champion the cohort of children with social workers**
  - ➢ **enhance partnerships with education settings**.

> **engage with a research partner to develop an evidence of what works for children with a social care involvement in education.**

Staffordshire has been allocated 146K to implement these duties and consultation is taking place on how these duties will be implemented by Staffordshire.

Since 8 March 2019, Staffordshire schools have continued to report strong attendance levels across mainstream schools; whilst special schools have also seen positive attendance, as is to be expected, this sector is struggling to fully engage all its families in regular full-time attendance. Across all of Staffordshire schools we have continued to ask schools to contact the family social care worker if the child's attendance is a concern, additionally we have monitored those parents who have failed to return their children to school, ensuring that in each case the school has put strategies in place to address the causal factors. In addition, we have re-introduced the issuing of penalty notices to parents for unauthorised leave and irregular attendance. Since the 8 March, we have issued 580 penalty notices and have received 142 requests from school for interventions relating to attendance. Current attendance data available to SCC indicates attendance overall to be at 94.1%. The last full year of pre-Covid data for 2018/19 showed overall attendance at 95.4%, so as expected there is a slight reduction.

Children with Disabilities

The third lockdown in the early part of 2021 proved the most difficult for us in respect of adequate capacity on the care market for children with disabilities, which was compounded by the cumulative effect of the Pandemic over time on the resilience of the families in receipt of support, as they had in many cases taken on more care themselves whilst isolating clinically vulnerable and extremely vulnerable family members during 2020 and the early part of this year. As a result, we needed to source more packages from non-contracted providers to fill what was a 'care gap' from January-March. Whilst we succeeded in maintaining packages of care throughout this did have a knock on effect on spend, and where at the end of quarter 3 we were under-budget for this provision, by the end of quarter 4 our spend overall came in at around £0.2M over budget for agency provided care. The overspend of £0.2m in 2020/21 (s17 payments) was offset however by other underspends in the Disability Teams budget (e.g salaries £0.1m / direct payments £0.250m). The Disability Teams budget overall in 20/21 was £4.3m vs spend £4.1m i.e. an overall underspend of £0.2m.

As the demands on the care market have eased a little through the spring we have been able to source the majority of packages via framework providers, but an over-reliance on a small number of providers, particularly in East Staffordshire, does mean the capacity from the market for this provision is likely to remain challenging for the remainder of 2021. Plans to address this are set out in another Cabinet Paper **- Intensive Support for Children with Disabilities -** which is scheduled for discussion at Cabinet in July 2021

What recovery will look like for the Children's Disability Care market moving forwards

SCC must provide care and support for children who meet the eligibility criteria for this under relevant provisions within the Children Act 1989, Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970, and Children & Families Act 2014 amongst others. Our current market lacks breadth and sourcing urgent packages, particularly for children with the most complex needs, is challenging. From the summer, we will be preparing new specifications for this support, undertaking extensive market engagement activity, and ultimately openly tendering for this to attract new entrants to the Staffordshire Market.

By establishing a Dynamic Purchasing System crucially this will allow us to add more providers over time, under properly contracted arrangements. The detailed plans for this piece of work are included in Cabinet proposals for **Intensive Support for Children with Disabilities,** discussed at Cabinet in July 2021. Evaluations of the success of this approach will be reported to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee from next year, once new contracts go live on April 1st 2022.

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

The impact of the January lockdown and related restrictions has resulted in increased demand across the CAMHS system.

Referrals into the SCC and CCG commissioned service for emotional health and wellbeing demonstrate this increased demand and have been consistently high since January 2021. Recovery approaches are underway with work in schools and communities resuming where it is possible to do so. Plans include school transition workshops, peer support groups and a series of short support sessions for children and young people over the summer. Virtual delivery enables children, young people and parents/carers to fluidly access support via group and individual intervention sessions, whilst face to face delivery has also begun.

The Staffordshire e-newsletter (Kind Minds) continues to be developed and issued to share information regarding services, training and resources to support children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Initially with an intended audience of education professionals this has a growing reach. Currently a feedback survey is out for completion to ensure that this partnership newsletter continues to be of value and is meeting the needs of its audience effectively.

SCC Officers have representation at the STP/ICS CAMHS Board and are therefore involved in workstreams linked to governance arrangements across the system, the emergence of an access policy, post COVID clinical planning, looked after children and the development of a system-wide landing/web page.

The DfE/DHSC 'Well-being for Education Return' project webinars have now been successfully delivered across Staffordshire. Feedback from education professionals in attendance suggests that these sessions have provided reassurance, useful resources and local service information.

What will recovery for Children's Mental Health look like going forwards?

More recently, the DfE have announced a second phase called 'Wellbeing for Education Recovery'. SCC intend that early years and staff wellbeing will be our focus. SCC are currently exploring a range of ideas including a virtual gym and wellbeing sessions, along with Mental Health First Aid and personal resilience training. We are also exploring peer support apps for both education staff and young people.

Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTs) delivery continues to develop in the post lockdown school environment across the three districts of Staffordshire that now have coverage. Recent announcements via the CCG suggest that one additional district of Staffordshire will gain an MHST in January 2022.

Domestic Abuse
The impact of the January 2021 lockdown and subsequent recovery over March – June 2021
In the October 2020, we reported that at the end of quarter 1 (April – June 2020) performance remained comparable with the same period in the previously year. At the start of the first lockdown, New Era (our commissioned domestic abuse services provider) saw a drop in the number of referrals to the service, although these did pick up again in May and had reached the level of the previous year by the end of May / early June. After the first lockdown was lifted, numbers of referrals increased by approximately 5% on those recorded at the same point last year. Following the return to school in September 2020, demand for services increased further. Initially this increase was not unusual, as referrals tend to increase at the start of school terms. However, the number of referrals has now reached volumes of around 30% greater than the same period last year.

What recovery will look like moving forwards?
Staffordshire Commissioner's Officer are the lead commissioner for the domestic abuse contract, which is jointly funded by SCO, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke City Council. The three commissioning organisations continue to work closely together and with the provider to mitigate against the impacts of the Covid pandemic on service delivery.
Since the first lockdown, domestic abuse support services have significantly adapted their delivery methods to ensure continuity of service and credit should be given to the dedication of their staff through this extremely challenging period. Services retained their 'front door' to victims and their families and the perpetrator programme has been adapted appropriately. For both victim and perpetrator services, availability of support and services has been maintained throughout the pandemic, largely via remote working arrangements and online delivery but with some face-to-face support where appropriate and safe to do so.
Recent funding secured from the Ministry of Justice, along with some identified underspend within the contract, has enabled the Victim Service to fund additional posts in areas of the service which are experiencing high demand. In addition, commissioners are identifying additional resources to address demand and to further increase staffing capacity. They are working with New Era to understand how waiting

lists can be reduced and what the financial investment would need to be to facilitate this.

CSC Recovery

Demand for services & referrals

FRT report referrals remain static across the system with a slight reduction in the number of phone calls and contacts. A reduction in referrals is anticipated due to the impending closure of schools for the summer holidays; however, this is a yearly occurrence; therefore, referrals are now reported to be at pre covid levels. The majority of referrals tend to be for the Early Help Service and whilst some areas have seen an increase in EH referrals, there has been an overall reduction from March to May.

One of the key challenges is the delay with some of the tier two providers who have accrued some backlogs with a waiting list of up to 10 weeks. This has also been compounded by the fact some tier two services are still not delivering face to face services. The EPDO's are working closely with these providers to address areas of concern and provide advice and support.

The demand for children's placements has continued with a national and local shortage of placements equipped to offer the placements that meet the needs of children with the most complex needs.

Children with a disability, many remained attending school on a part-time time table with little or no direct health support and extremely restricted short break/respite support. Hospice support has been significantly reduced, home care support has been difficult to acquire due capacity in the system and the impact of covid on adult services- with many older adults remaining in their homes in preference to residential care. This has led to an increased number of families experiencing significant pressures and reaching breaking point with more disabled children either on the edge of care or coming into care.

There has been an increase in prevention referrals in YOS; however, there are no current concerns regarding the ability to allocate work. There are no current backlogs in the criminal Courts.

Court capacity

The closure of the courts for a period during each lockdown and the move to virtual hearings has had a significant impact on the timeliness of both private and public law cases, the 'backlog' has technically been removed by the allocation of court dates to all cases however, these are significantly more delayed than pre-covid timescales. In children's social care the impact of the delays is that court proceedings are lasting up to 46 weeks rather than the previous 26 weeks, in practice, this means children and families experience uncertainty and delay in planning, additional assessments, statements and direct work is required over the duration of proceedings including extra statutory reviews and social work involvement is extended in many cases-

therefore impacting on the capacity in the system and the number of children in our care.

Venue capacity

Restrictions around building/room/ cleaning capacity to support family time arrangements will remain in place until 1st October 2021.

Fostering Service have raised concerns in relation to the ability to convene the much needed and valued foster carer support groups due to the current restrictions and venue capacity.

Returning to the office

A key part of CSC's recovery planning is in respect of the return to the office for staff. Whilst the Government has announced this week a plan of, 'everyone back to work' from 19th July 2021, the Local Authority have confirmed the current restrictions will remain in place until 1st October. Steve Lycett continues to have lead responsibility for this and will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this.

The group considered the continuation of the restrictions post 19th July would have an adverse impact upon several areas and felt staff should be encouraged to return to the office without delay. Key concerns include:

- The emotional wellbeing of the staff who will have to continue to work in isolation given the very limited opportunities to meet their teams and receive the required emotional support given the nature of the job they do.
- It is anticipated there will be an influx of new staff joining the LA over the next few months and it is imperative they receive the practical and emotional support from their team from the outset
- The need to work closely with the teams to plan and deliver the aims and objectives of the transformation.

What will recovery look like, what is SCC responsible for and how will this be managed

CSC have been operating as BAU for many months. FRT and respective HOS will continue to monitor, review and plan accordingly as referrals are received. There has been a marked increase in the complexity of referrals received and more recently we have seen a noticeable increase in incidents of family breakdown for older teenage children especially, who have required the support of IPS or have needed to be looked after by the Local Authority. Family Meetings / FGC will continue to be progressed by all Team Managers and Social Workers for all families to ensure a plan of support is in place without delay.

The Local Authority has also seen an increase in referrals for self-harm indicating a deterioration in parental and child mental illness as a consequence of the covid pandemic. FRT will continue to monitor and review these referrals and ensure families are progressed in a timely manner and are signposted to the right services at the time of need. The Social Workers in school's initiative will also have a key role in monitoring and reviewing this cohort of children.

Recovery for CWD will be children having full access to all aspects of their support packages to ensure short breaks provide families with carer relief to enable them to continue caring for their children.

Appendix 3

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Our Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy was agreed by Cabinet and scrutinised by the Prosperous Select Committee in June 2020. At that time, the impact of the crisis on the economy was unclear. While there is still some uncertainty around the longer-term impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, through the 4-step route out of lockdown we have seen the gradual re-opening of our economy.

Uncertainty does remain, and it is therefore very important that our Strategy and associated delivery plan(s) are relevant and capable of responding to whatever situation becomes a reality over the coming months and years.

To recap, our current Strategy sets out our priorities for the next five years through four non-linear phases:

a. **Respond** – support our businesses and residents through the Covid19 pandemic.
b. **Recover** – create the conditions to support our businesses and residents to return-to-work as soon as possible.
c. **Renew** – continue to progress those priorities that will play an important role in achieving our ambitions to develop the local economy beyond the current crisis.
d. **Transform** – utilise the opportunities presented by the current economic conditions by supporting the transformation of the local economy to be digital, clean and higher-value.

The five economic themes of *business environment*, *people*, *infrastructure*, *place* and *ideas* that form the integral part of our Strategic Plan and the national and local industrial strategies remain relevant, but the strategic priorities aligned to these themes have been reconsidered in response to the Covid19.

There are several key issues to consider that cut across all of the themes including the need to meet carbon-neutral targets, supporting inclusive growth to ensure all our residents benefit from the development of the local economy including within urban and rural areas and communicating and engaging effectively with our businesses and residents, thereby creating a strong Staffordshire identity.

As we move into Stage 4 of the national recovery plan, our intention is to now review our existing Strategy. But it is important to reflect on our current situation and how we can support and develop further Staffordshire's economy.

Current state of the Staffordshire Economy

Overall, the proportion of working age Staffordshire residents on a Government support schemes is estimated to be at 9%, which lower than the national average of 11% and regional averages of 12% as greater numbers of Staffordshire residents have been able to return to work. This data, which covers the period up to August 2021 is significantly lower than when last reported to the Committee when the Staffordshire figure stood at 14.2%.

The claimant count (Universal Credit) in Staffordshire at August 2021 stood at a total of 20,340 claimants with a claimant rate of 3.8% of the working age population much lower than the 5.1% last reported to the Committee. However, not all will be out of work. Whilst there have been some announcements of potential redundancies, due to the move to Universal Credit claimant count figures now also include those that have had a lower income through Covid-19, including furloughed staff and part time employees, short-term layoffs and self-employed that have paused or ceased operating.

The claimant count rate is still relatively low in Staffordshire (3.8%) compared to regionally in the West Midlands (6.3%) and nationally (5.3%), however, it is young people, the lowest paid (including those in manual occupations, more routine or less skilled jobs) and part-time workers who continue to feel the impact of the economic shock the most.

Unemployment and those claiming benefits has reduced slowly over more recent months, however, there remains a considerable number of employees furloughed within the county (19,300) albeit this number is significantly below that experienced during the third national lockdown which began in January 2021.

Whilst the furlough scheme has been further extended to the end of September 2021, the contribution of employers to the scheme rose to 20% in August. There is still a great deal of uncertainty around the future health of the economy, particularly as economic support measures are reduced or stopped.

There is room for some cautious optimism, The Bank of England has stated that the UK economy will enjoy its fastest growth in more than 70 years in 2021 as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, with the economy expected to grow by 7.25% this year which follows a contraction of 9.9% in 2020 the biggest in 300 years.

In terms of the wider ongoing economic impact from the pandemic, UK Gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have grown for a fifth consecutive month in June 2021, by 1.0%, but remains 2.2% below its pre-pandemic level (February 2020).

Services continued to be the main contributor to GDP's recovery in June 2021, growing by 1.5% in June 2021 following a revised 0.7% growth in May 2021. Health activities contributed the most to services output as visits to GPs increased in June 2021, while hospitality benefitted from its first full month of indoor dining since coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions were eased on 17 May. Food and beverage services activities was again the main contributor to the growth in consumer-facing

services, growing by 10.1% in June 2021. This is reflective of the easing of restrictions allowing businesses in retail, hospitality and the visitor economy to reopen.

The Bank of England is now expecting the unemployment rate to peak at 5.5% later this year, which is far below the 7.75% it predicted in February. It is expected that extra Government spending such as the extension of the furlough scheme until the end of September, a stronger recovery, and an assumption that the long-term damage from the pandemic will be smaller than previously expected will all help limit job losses.

The job vacancies data also shows signs of economic recovery with a significant uplift in recruitment over recent months to above pre-COVID levels. This is reflective of the further opening up of the economy with more businesses being able to open as restrictions ease. Staffordshire has seen a year on year growth in job vacancies in August of 53%, or more than an additional 9,200 vacancies. The total number of unique vacancies in Staffordshire stood at 26,750 jobs in August 2021.

As more jobs become available, there are increasing signs of skills shortages in a number of sectors, with insufficient labour supply to meet demand. This is currently particularly relevant in digital/IT roles, social care (both adults and children), hospitality such as chefs and waiting staff, haulage HGV drivers, and engineering.

Within Staffordshire there have been several positive major job creating announcements in recent months including:

- JCB is recruiting 100 new welders for its Staffordshire factories as demand for its products continues to grow. Recruitment is underway at the manufacturing giant's world headquarters, as well as at is plants in Cheadle and Uttoxeter. This month, JCB will also welcome an additional 15 recruits on to its fabrication and welding apprenticeship. In the past three years, almost 70 welding apprentices have passed their courses and gained permanent employment at the group.
- Six hundred new jobs are being created at two Screwfix distribution centres in Staffordshire. The trade tools, accessories and hardware products retailer is on the look out for hundreds of new, full-time employees across its sites at Stafford and Lichfield.
- National retailer Just for Pets has secured an additional two stores in the West Midlands as part of its UK expansion drive. Just for Pets has opened its largest space to date in Stafford, a 10,000 sq ft store on Kingsmead Retail Park.
- IT solutions provider Instem has acquired one of its competitors in a deal worth £11.4 million. The Staffordshire-based business has taken over life sciences software company PDS Pathology Data Systems Ltd. Headquartered in Switzerland, and with offices in the United States and Japan, PDS has been a direct competitor of Instem for more than 25 years. All of its 35-strong workforce will now be fully integrated into the Instem business, increasing Instem's operational capacity, particularly in the United States, Swiss and Japanese markets.

- A group of Staffordshire-based companies have launched a higher apprenticeship scheme – and are on the lookout for seven new recruits. Bri-Stor Group has seven vacancies across its four companies. The 500-strong group, which is based in Hixon near Stafford, has taken on at least 13 engineering apprentices every year for the last 11 years.

Staffordshire Means Back to Business (Additional Restrictions Grant)

A key component of our response through the Strategy has been enhanced two tier working with our Districts and Boroughs through Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The programme has been designed in discussion with District and Borough Councils, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chambers of Commerce. It allows for the pooling of the ARG the local authorities received from central government, together with a significant contribution from Staffordshire County Council (£862,000). This programme was approved by Cabinet in January 2021.

It was designed to be cross cutting and to respond to all four component parts of the Strategy (respond, recover, renew, and transform) through the following work streams:
- Staffordshire 500, Apprentices Wage Support
- Nil Cost Training for Employers Top Up Project
- Small Business "To Thrive" Financial Support (including business start up, capital support through loans and grants to enable Covid related adjustments)
- Ignite (encouraging young people to start their own businesses)

All 8 Districts and Boroughs have signed up to the programme framing their contribution within the context of how they see the issues faced by their local economy can be assisted.

The total programme value is £5.0m including match funding from outside Staffordshire. The 8 Districts, plus SCC have contributed a total of £3.5m to the scheme. In total £1.8m has been committed to be spent with Staffordshire businesses.

Staffordshire Means Back to Business ARG was soft launched in April using the County's strategic contribution as the catalyst to activate interest across the County. Each individual Borough and District was "activated" as and when their approvals were in place (we were able to operate at different speeds and yet not withhold opportunities because of the County's umbrella investment). The outputs to date are detailed below:

Committed outputs	Staffs Apprenticeship 500 Output	Nil Cost Training Top Up Output	Business Start Up - Start Up Loans Output	Business Start Up - Ignite Output	Business Start Up - Start Up Output	Small Business 'To Thrive' Output	Total Output
Cannock Chase	47	26	1	10	19	2	**105**
East Staffordshire	12	27	0	22	27	4	**92**
Lichfield	22	29	0	47	8	4	**110**
Newcastle-under-Lyme	22	27	1	88	42	6	**186**
South Staffordshire	8	15	2	42	12	5	**84**
Stafford	43	35	3	35	87	4	**207**
Staffordshire Moorlands	11	29	2	38	57	5	**142**
Tamworth	11	8	1	15	13	6	**54**
Total Commitments	**176**	**196**	**10**	**297**	**265**	**36**	**980**

With our partners, much has been done in a very short period. The Back to Business Programme (ARG) is subject to monthly progress meeting to understand where take up has been lighter than expected, and to push appropriate marketing. Although we anticipate a lot of activity in the next few months as we move into Stage 4 and businesses really start to trade more fluently.

Spotlight on i54 Western Extension

i54 Western Extension again cut across all themes of the strategy as ARG did, yet in a slightly different way. Whilst much of the work was underway, it was about practically responding to the pandemic, to continue to create the opportunities that would assist the economy to recover, renew and transform, without introducing delay and faltering activity. Taking the lead to create the right conditions for growth and working as part of a strong Joint Venture Partnership, we continued to deliver the 60 acre i54 Western Extension site, which will now be substantially complete by the end of July. This creates the opportunity for our economy to thrive.

With the commitment of Staffordshire County Council, City of Wolverhampton Council, South Staffordshire Council and both the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Black Country Local Enterprise Partnerships to bring forward the site, a funding package was confirmed in early 2019 allowing the access road serving the site to be developed and completed in March 2020 two weeks ahead of programme.

Despite the many challenge caused by the Covid 19 pandemic and periods of wet weather, the project team have worked safely throughout, with an advanced work package for the main earthworks programme completed on schedule in July 2020 with the current main earth works package following directly after.

In preparing the development platform, which can accommodate up to 1 million square feet of employment floor space, the team have successfully moved 86,300m3 of topsoil, excavated, processed and placed 145,000m3 of weathered and hard rock and installed half a kilometre of drainage.

There are already some very exciting opportunities at an advanced stage of negotiation with two occupiers including   an exclusivity agreement and Heads of Terms signed with a modern methods of manufacturing company and advanced discussions with another international manufacturing business. Without continuing to deliver this scheme through Covid, these opportunities would not be realised so soon.

As well as the employment opportunities on the site, there will also be enhancements to access to Wobaston Road through provision of a new cycleway, the formation of new habitats and a significant improvement to the bridleway which was diverted round the site as part of the works.

Conclusion

We are seeing positive signs of recovery in the Staffordshire economy which continues to perform ahead of the national and regional picture. Returning to pre pandemic levels of economic activity will take some time and there will undoubtedly be some negative impacts as it restructures and adapts to future challenges and opportunities.

Our Strategy recognises that many opportunities have arisen that we need to grasp to hasten the development of the Staffordshire economy, such as the increase in homeworking and positive environmental impacts. Delivering our Strategy and taking full advantage of these opportunities will further enable the Staffordshire economy to *renew* and ultimately *transform* into a place where clean, productive businesses are created and thrive whilst existing business are supported to fully participate in the new economy.

Appendix 5

Communities

Overall buildings-based recovery has been slower than anticipated due to local guidance and social distancing measures which have been maintained

The ongoing impact of this is increased isolation, loneliness and is impacting on people's ability to remain independent and resilient.

We are seeing a number of parents who would have previously been fine with the social support now needing additional services and help.

Section A – Recovery Update (October 2020 – July 2021):

Below is an update on recovery of community-based services / support since the previous Recovery Update Cabinet Report in October 2020:

1. Libraries:

1.1.   During 2021, we have continued to recover the physical library offer in line with government and sector guidance. Aspects of the service have been reintroduced gradually at each recovery milestone. This includes:

- **From 12 April** - PC access, printing, study space and managed browsing in static libraries

- **From 17 May** – extended opening hours – including late nights, Saturday afternoon and Sunday opening; managed browsing on our mobile libraries; meeting room use for small groups and 1-1 sessions

- **From 19 July** - SCC libraries reverted to full opening hours; quarantining of stock ceased; meeting rooms were made available for hire, subject to Risk Assessments; mobile library routes were extended

1.2.   To keep library staff, volunteers, and customers safe, mask wearing continues to be encouraged in public areas. Hand sanitising, one-way systems, QR codes, Perspex screens have remained in place and are subject to further review.

1.3.   While the recovery of the physical library offer has been slow, the digital library offer continues to grow.

2. Children's Centres:

2.1.   Since June 2020, appropriate Children's Centres have continued to provide Childcare with adherence to the appropriate Government Guidance.

2.2.   Since August 2020, appropriate Children Centres have continued to facilitate Family Time for children in our care. This continues to be a priority for the County Council as

we seek to meet the needs of our children and their families whilst also responding to the requirements of the Courts.

2.3.   Since September 2020, appropriate Children Centres have recommenced health and wellbeing appointments. Recommencement of health and wellbeing provision has continued to be embedded in line with the recovery plans of health partners.

2.4.   The Children's Centre Early Years Core Offer reassumed in April 2021 in line with the appropriate Government Guidance. Due to requirements of this, Government Guidance restrictions have remained in place. This has led to a reduction in provision available through the Centres compared to pre-Covid-19. Considering this, the Early Years Coordination Service continues to facilitate a virtual offer which is supported by a broader Family Hub Offer.

3.   Archives and Heritage:

3.1.   Archives and Heritage continued to operate with Staffordshire Record Office open on an advanced booking basis for four spaces supported by a remote enquiry and copying service.

3.2.   Public services were suspended in November 2020 and from January to 13 April 2021 in line with national restrictions. A remote service was maintained with staff working from home. Staff continued to work from home and from the office where required to manage collections, deliver the public service or to enable them to deliver their role.

3.3.   The William Salt Library remains closed with the agreement of the William Salt Library Trust. Access to the collection is provided through Staffordshire Record Office.

3.4.   Stoke on Trent City Archives reopened to the public on 12th May 2021 on a phased basis. Lichfield History Access Point reopened on a booking only basis on 29 June 2021.

3.5.   **The service launched the Lockdown Memories project in July 2020 to record the community experience of the pandemic. The Pandemic War Diary project has been approved to record the corporate response to COVID-19.**

4.   Rural (including Country Parks and Rights of Way):

4.1.   All countryside sites and car parks remain fully open with COVID signage in place. This includes the Visitor centres at Cannock Chase and Chasewater being open, toilet facilities at most sites, parking machines operational at Chasewater, Marquis Drive and Milford. The Great War Hut at Marquis Drive remains closed at present.

4.2.   Volunteers are back supporting the country parks. Additional marshals are in place at Chasewater and Cannock Chase for weekends and bank holidays to help manage safety (particularly fire, water safety and parking issues) and engage with visitors.

4.3.   Cafes are open at Cannock Chase, Chasewater and Froghall Wharf and the play area is now open at Greenway Bank. New play areas are being installed at Cannock

Chase and Chasewater during July and August. Trading vendors (ice creams) have been appointed on new COVID-19 terms.

4.4. Environment and Rights of Way staff are generally working from home but undertaking field work following COVID-safe guidelines.

4.5. Availability of contract cleaners is impacting on public toilet provision at some sites, impacting on visitor experience.

5. Trading Standards and Coroners:

5.1. Trading Standards Services have continued to operate with the majority of staff working from home and dealing with the majority of issues by telephone and email.

5.2. Inspections and visits to business premises have taken place where necessary following Covid-19 guidance ensuring contractual and statutory work has been completed.

5.3. Trading Standards have continued to co-ordinate and carry out Covid-19 related enforcement and prevention activities in partnership with Police and District colleagues. This includes serving formal Directions on premises where there have been breaches of Covid -19 restrictions legislation.

5.4. Officers engaged with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) and sports ground premise owners planning in advance of the return of spectators into sports grounds and have supported the premise owners with the sporting events that have recently taken place with reduced capacity crowds .

6. Economy, Infrastructure & Skills community work:

6.1. The recovery of community assets and activities with E,I&S continues to be managed within their respective service areas as business as usual or is monitored through other Recovery Groups.

6.2. The Flood Risk Management team continue to investigate and seek solutions to property flooding problems and have won a £6m bid from Defra to improve community resilience to flooding.

6.3. The School Crossing Patrol service continues to adapt to specific needs at individual schools and road safety education is starting to resume within the classroom as well as through the provision of on-line resources developed during the pandemic.

6.4. School Transport is fully operational, though during June there has been a significant increase in number of pupils isolating which has impacted on a number of routes serving schools across the county (increasing workload as a result)

6.5. Local bus services are now operating at / or close to 100%, patronage levels have increased on average to around 60% of pre pandemic levels.

6.6. Household Waste Recycling Sites remain open, with certain restrictions in place.

7. **Supportive Communities (taken from Public Health update) & Volunteering**

7.1. Supportive Communities has worked closely with partners, including the voluntary sector, to ensure vulnerable citizens (including the clinically extremely vulnerable) had access to the support they needed through the lockdown. It has provided communities with information, advice and guidance and linked them to voluntary and local community resources.

7.2. 149 Mutual Aid Groups have also been supported to step up during the Covid-19 pandemic to support their communities with varying local offers, through effective relationships with our partners (including local anchor organisations).

7.3. In October 2020 18 Community Help Points were launched in trusted venues in local communities e.g. libraries and community venues. These provide a non-digital offer information, advice, and guidance and to actively signpost to very local community assets

7.4. A new way of connecting and engaging with communities was developed to tackle fake news linked to Covid and to increase the uptake of the Covid vaccine in the Burton area.   The Community Champions programme recruited 50 voices with a reach of over 1,000 people from the Burton community. This included local community representative, individuals, VCSE, Public and private sector. This group has successfully targeted two-way communication resulting in an increase in Covid compliance and vaccine uptake.

7.5. £200k grant funding has been provided to support local community groups to stay open and deliver a level of provision between January to June 2021.

7.6. There have been several successful campaigns using the nudge theory approach and tied to #DoingOurBit to help tackle some of the potential negative impacts of Covid-19. This include the Happy At Home Christmas gifting campaign and the Let's beat Loneliness Together campaign.

7.7. The Do-It Staffordshire platform been used by SCC and NHS partners throughout lockdown. This has involved supporting with urgent issues and requests such as supporting vaccination centres, hospitals, 'entitled to' benefit checker, and temporary mortuaries. 1350 Staffordshire residents to step up to volunteer through the iCare and iCount campaigns.

7.8. In addition, the Do-It iCount platform (our internal volunteering platform), has received urgent demand for internal volunteers due to lockdown, Health Protection Board requests, and help required by the NHS. We have had 156 unique iCount volunteers since the Do-It iCount platform went live in September 2020 to date – mostly in response to second peak lockdown demands in January / February.

Section B – Priorities moving forward for recovery

8. **Libraries:**

8.1. To rebuild customer confidence and encourage increased engagement with the library offer regular activities will be phased in from September (e.g. Baby Bounce and Rhyme, Places of Welcome, IT Buddies) and the re-introduction of overdue charges will be delayed until 1 Oct

8.2. We continue to work with our partner organisations to support the CMLs to recover their library offer and ensure a consistent approach across Staffordshire's library network

8.3. Attached as appendix A is the Staffordshire Libraries COVID-19 phased recovery plan.

9. Children's Centres:

9.1. Recovery of Children's Centres is continuing with provision increasing over the Summer 2021. The Service is continuing to seek specialist Health, Safety & Wellbeing information, advice, and guidance as it becomes available in order to ensure the Children Centre recovery continues at pace.

9.2. Family Time for children in our care continues to be a priority for the County Council as we seek to meet the needs of our children and their families whilst also responding to the requirements of the Courts.

9.3. See appendix B for an updated 'Reopening Children's Centres Recovery Plan' for further details on priorities for recovery moving forward.

10. Archives and Heritage:

10.1. From 19 July the service will recover its onsite volunteer offer with groups returning to Staffordshire Record Office on a phased basis through to September/October 2021.

10.2. From September/October the service will re-establish activities and events, complying with social distancing as appropriate. Capacity for onsite visitors will be reviewed. The Pandemic War Diary project will begin to record Staffordshire County Council's response.

10.3. SCC Archives and Heritage will be promoting the onsite visitor offer, the return of volunteers, recruitment of new volunteers to support the offer, and the return to Stafford town centre. SCC will also be promoting the digital offer and online events.

10.4. SCC Archives and Heritage **will be monitoring** occupancy rates in visitor spaces, the increase of capacity with social distancing guidelines, and the Impact of COVID-19 on income for the service.

10.5. For further information, please see attached an updated Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Recovery plan at Appendix C.

11. Rural (including Country Parks and Rights of Way):

11.1.   We are exploring how we can restore volunteering on the Rights of Way network, pending changes in guidance and a health and safety review. Transport is a key constraint on many parts of the network, and this is impacting on service delivery.

12. Economy, Infrastructure & Skills community work:

12.1.   Highways maintenance and construction activities will continue to take place to keep the road network accessible for all; and Highway support continues to be provided to local councils and businesses adapting to changes in social distancing requirements.

12.2.   To help maintain the substantial rise in walking and cycling levels during the pandemic, all opportunities are being taken to secure funding to provide permanent improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure, in line with the 2021 version of Staffordshire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

13. Trading Standards and Coroners:

13.1.   Coroners inquests continue to be held, making use of digital facilities with limited attendees in person and remote access for most. Inquests requiring a jury are taking place making use of the County Council Chamber.

14. Supportive Communities & Volunteering

14.1.   A further £50k in small grants is currently being disseminated to VCSE groups by Support Staffordshire Locality Officers. These small grants will be used to offer training, advice, and support for groups to 'open-up' post Covid

14.2.   Following the success of the Burton Community Champions work, Public Health also intend to roll this engagement model and approach to other localities.

14.3.   As people are returning to work and social events, the focus of the Do-It volunteering platform needs to change to ensure it is sustainable. The platform will be developed to accommodate the needs of the Community Champions programme as it expands, enabling a digital space to share and communicate trusted information and local priorities.

14.4.   Champions will also be able to use the platform to recruit volunteers as part of the wider Do It Staffordshire communications plan. Through the Volunteering Task and Finish Group (see below), decisions will be made of the future volunteering priorities of the county council and where the platform fits within them.

14.5.   Following discussions at the Communities Leadership Group, a Volunteering Task and Finish Group has been established. The first meeting of the group took place on 12th July with officers involved in volunteering from across the Council, as well as our VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partner. The purpose of this groups is to:

- **Increase the number of volunteers** into key service areas that have been impacted by Covid-19.

- **Review our offer for volunteers** in order to ensure the Council can provide a consistent and attractive offer and a positive experience for volunteers.

- **Review our internal policies** on volunteering to support and encourage our staff to volunteer within their communities.

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7.2.   149 Mutual Aid Groups have also been supported to step up during the Covid-19 pandemic to support their communities with varying local offers, through effective relationships with our partners (including local anchor organisations).

7.3.   In October 2020 18 Community Help Points were launched in trusted venues in local communities e.g. libraries and community venues. These provide a non-digital offer information, advice, and guidance and to actively signpost to very local community assets

7.4.   A new way of connecting and engaging with communities was developed to tackle fake news linked to Covid and to increase the uptake of the Covid vaccine in the Burton area.   The Community Champions programme recruited 50 voices with a reach of over 1,000 people from the Burton community. This included local community representative, individuals, VCSE, Public and private sector. This group has successfully targeted two-way communication resulting in an increase in Covid compliance and vaccine uptake.

7.5.   £200k grant funding has been provided to support local community groups to stay open and deliver a level of provision between January to June 2021.

7.6.   There have been several successful campaigns using the nudge theory approach and tied to #DoingOurBit to help tackle some of the potential negative impacts of Covid-19. This include the Happy At Home Christmas gifting campaign and the Let's beat Loneliness Together campaign.

7.7.   The Do-It Staffordshire platform been used by SCC and NHS partners throughout lockdown. This has involved supporting with urgent issues and requests such as supporting vaccination centres, hospitals, 'entitled to' benefit checker, and temporary mortuaries. 1350 Staffordshire residents to step up to volunteer through the iCare and iCount campaigns.

7.8.   In addition, the Do-It iCount platform (our internal volunteering platform), has received urgent demand for internal volunteers due to lockdown, Health Protection Board requests, and help required by the NHS. We have had 156 unique iCount volunteers since the Do-It iCount platform went live in September 2020 to date – mostly in response to second peak lockdown demands in January / February.

Section B – Priorities moving forward for recovery

8. **Libraries:**

8.1. To rebuild customer confidence and encourage increased engagement with the library offer regular activities will be phased in from September (e.g. Baby Bounce and Rhyme, Places of Welcome, IT Buddies) and the re-introduction of overdue charges will be delayed until 1 Oct

8.2. We continue to work with our partner organisations to support the CMLs to recover their library offer and ensure a consistent approach across Staffordshire's library network

8.3. Attached as appendix A is the Staffordshire Libraries COVID-19 phased recovery plan.

9. Children's Centres:

9.1. Recovery of Children's Centres is continuing with provision increasing over the Summer 2021. The Service is continuing to seek specialist Health, Safety & Wellbeing information, advice, and guidance as it becomes available in order to ensure the Children Centre recovery continues at pace.

9.2. Family Time for children in our care continues to be a priority for the County Council as we seek to meet the needs of our children and their families whilst also responding to the requirements of the Courts.

9.3. See appendix B for an updated 'Reopening Children's Centres Recovery Plan' for further details on priorities for recovery moving forward.

10. Archives and Heritage:

10.1. From 19 July the service will recover its onsite volunteer offer with groups returning to Staffordshire Record Office on a phased basis through to September/October 2021.

10.2. From September/October the service will re-establish activities and events, complying with social distancing as appropriate. Capacity for onsite visitors will be reviewed. The Pandemic War Diary project will begin to record Staffordshire County Council's response.

10.3. SCC Archives and Heritage will be promoting the onsite visitor offer, the return of volunteers, recruitment of new volunteers to support the offer, and the return to Stafford town centre. SCC will also be promoting the digital offer and online events.

10.4. SCC Archives and Heritage **will be monitoring** occupancy rates in visitor spaces, the increase of capacity with social distancing guidelines, and the Impact of COVID-19 on income for the service.

10.5. For further information, please see attached an updated Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Recovery plan at Appendix C.

11. Rural (including Country Parks and Rights of Way):

11.1. We are exploring how we can restore volunteering on the Rights of Way network, pending changes in guidance and a health and safety review. Transport is a key constraint on many parts of the network, and this is impacting on service delivery.

12. Economy, Infrastructure & Skills community work:

12.1. Highways maintenance and construction activities will continue to take place to keep the road network accessible for all; and Highway support continues to be provided to local councils and businesses adapting to changes in social distancing requirements.

12.2. To help maintain the substantial rise in walking and cycling levels during the pandemic, all opportunities are being taken to secure funding to provide permanent improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure, in line with the 2021 version of Staffordshire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

13. Trading Standards and Coroners:

13.1. Coroners inquests continue to be held, making use of digital facilities with limited attendees in person and remote access for most. Inquests requiring a jury are taking place making use of the County Council Chamber.

14. Supportive Communities & Volunteering

14.1. A further £50k in small grants is currently being disseminated to VCSE groups by Support Staffordshire Locality Officers. These small grants will be used to offer training, advice, and support for groups to 'open-up' post Covid

14.2. Following the success of the Burton Community Champions work, Public Health also intend to roll this engagement model and approach to other localities.

14.3. As people are returning to work and social events, the focus of the Do-It volunteering platform needs to change to ensure it is sustainable. The platform will be developed to accommodate the needs of the Community Champions programme as it expands, enabling a digital space to share and communicate trusted information and local priorities.

14.4. Champions will also be able to use the platform to recruit volunteers as part of the wider Do It Staffordshire communications plan. Through the Volunteering Task and Finish Group (see below), decisions will be made of the future volunteering priorities of the county council and where the platform fits within them.

14.5. Following discussions at the Communities Leadership Group, a Volunteering Task and Finish Group has been established. The first meeting of the group took place on 12th July with officers involved in volunteering from across the Council, as well as our VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partner. The purpose of this groups is to:

- **Increase the number of volunteers** into key service areas that have been impacted by Covid-19.

- **Review our offer for volunteers** in order to ensure the Council can provide a consistent and attractive offer and a positive experience for volunteers.

- **Review our internal policies** on volunteering to support and encourage our staff to volunteer within their communities.

Appendix 5A Libraries Recovery – Steps and Tiered restrictions from 2 December 2020 – 1st October 2021

The library offer within each step/tier is subject to Government guidance, review and library risk assessments

	Under review	October	September	Not before 16 August	Tier 1 Step 4 19 July	Tier 2 Step 3 17 May	Tier 3 Step 2 12 April	Tier 4	Tier 5	Full Lockdown
Libraries open 10am – 4pm							✔	✔	✔	
Libraries closed after 5pm							✔	✔	✔	
Stafford Library closed on Sundays							✔	✔	✔	
Standard opening hours					✔					
Staff based at one library only							✔	✔	✔	✔
Staff to provide relief between libraries					✔	✔				
Staff to work from home where possible/redeployed								✔	✔	✔
Mobile Library Service order and collect					✔	✔	✔			
Mobile Library Service browsing					✔	✔				
Housebound Service					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Transport between libraries					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Order & Collect					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Grab & Go					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
PC Access				Increase availability from 16.8	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Printing					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Photocopying staff assisted					✔	✔				
Public Photocopying			✔							
Study space					✔	✔	✔			
Browsing					✔	✔	✔			

Overdue Charges	✔									
Virtual events					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Virtual activities					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Events		✔ social distancing maintained			✔					
Activities					✔ BBR starts September					
Bus passes					✔					
Blue Badges	✔									
IT assistance					✔					
Toilets			✔ Zoono Cleaning	✔	available for meeting room hire & emergencies					
Requests					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Reading Group requests					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
New book deliveries					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
New audio deliveries					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Bookstart deliveries					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔ restricted delivery of packs to Astonfields
Meeting room use for 1-1 sessions conducted by partners such as job club, Everyone Health etc					✔	✔				
Meeting room use by partners for small group sessions					✔	✔				
Meeting room use by SCC staff for small groups					✔	✔				

Meeting Rooms hire					✔ with RAs in place					
Library spaces for meeting			✔							
Refreshments			✔							
Reading Friends					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Places of Welcome			✔	✔						
IT by Telephone					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
IT Buddies			✔ reintroduce from 16 August							
Collection HQ work					✔	✔	✔			
Stock management					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Volunteers resume in SCC libraries e.g. BBR, shelving			✔		BBR starts September					
Schools Library Service					✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Test and Trace					✔ optional	✔	✔			
Book Quarantine						Or spray	✔			
Plastic seating			✔							
Soft furnishings in library spaces			✔ Zoono Cleaning	✔						

Appendix 5B - Reopening Children's Centres Recovery Plan Overview:

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) is seeking to facilitate the Recovery of Children's Centres through Step 2 of the new HM Government Roadmap – see below: -

HM Government

STEP 2

NO EARLIER THAN 12 APRIL
At least 5 weeks after Step 1

BUSINESS / ACTIVITIES

All retail

Personal care

Libraries and community centres

Most outdoor attractions

Indoor leisure inc. gyms
(individual or household use only)

Self-contained accommodation

All children's activities

Outdoor hospitality

Indoor parent and child groups
(up to 15 people, excluding under 5s)

LARGER EVENTS

Funerals
(30 people)

Weddings, wakes, receptions
(15 people)

Event pilots

TRAVEL

Domestic overnight stays
(household only)

No international holidays

COVID-19 ROADMAP 2021

Please note that Childcare on site, Family Time and Social Care bookings and Health Appointments are already taking place. This Recovery Plan demonstrates the introduction of the recommencement of the Children's Centre Early Years Core Offer.

Phase:	Phase One:	Phase Two:	Phase Three:
Target Dates:	W/C 22/03/2021	W/C 29/03/2021	W/C 10/04/2021
Function:	Communication is sent to all providers to confirm the reopening of the Early Years Core Offer. This will specify the age range of 0-2 years to ensure we can support new parents back into socialisation. 1 x session per centre / outreach venue running at any one time to prevent exceeding the 15 people outlined within the government guidelines giving us control of communal areas. Deadline of Friday the 26th March to express an interest in returning to the centres.	Early Years Coordinator to liaise with the providers to confirm room bookings. Inductions to take place and risk assessment to be agreed and implemented prior to commencement of sessions. Priority to be given to ensure 0-2 age range is taken into consideration and a variety of services can be offered. All providers need to arrange their own booking system to ensure drop in is not available.	Final arrangements in place ready for commencement of services on the 12/04/2021.
Centres:	Cannock Chase Children's Centre Western Springs Children's Centre East Staffordshire Children's Centre Hill Street Children's Centre Newcastle Children's Centre Maryhill Children's Centre Charnwood Children's Centre Silkmore Children's Centre		

	Landywood Children's Centre Staffordshire Moorlands Children's Centre Leyfields Children's Centre Glascote Children's Centre
Additional Comments:	Government Guidance will be reviewed daily, and this process will be amended to suit. Arrival and departure will be coordinated to ensure that no more than 15 attendees will be on site to attend a session ensuring social distancing is always maintained. Face masks will always be worn by adults whilst on site unless they have a medical exemption. Children are not required to wear face masks in line with the government guidance. Providers will need to ensure the rooms and touchpoints are cleaned and disinfected prior to leaving the site or starting a new group. Providers to ensure that they fully understand and adhere to the buildings COVID secure risk assessment as well as their own session risk assessment.

The above dates and content continue to be subject to change as we await further Government Guidance.

Appendix 5C - Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Recovery Plan – Update 14 September 2021

Recovery June-September 2021

Our recovery was phased with phase 1 being the first reopening in July 2020 just for Staffordshire Record Office gradually recovering our full opening hours. Phase 2 reinstated the full opening hours and included Saturday opening. A summary of this phase of recovery was reported in the 6 July 2021 update. From 19 July we implemented phase 3 of our recovery:

- We re-introduced volunteer group sessions using the Learning and Archive Resource Centre, following social distancing and hygiene guidelines. 39 volunteers have returned (27 onsite, 12 working remotely).
- We delivered Lockdown Memories sessions to schools (delayed from January)
- We have continued to engage with people through social media
- We have planned onsite events with partners to commence September/October
- We have delivered our onsite services at Staffordshire Record Office through our full opening hours offering six spaces for visitors requiring advance booking and pre-ordering of documents. Quarantining of documents has ceased in line with The National Archives guidance.
- Stoke on Trent City Archives is also open on temporary opening hours in accordance with the City Council guidelines.

Priorities for phase 4 recovery from 1 October 2021

A H&S representative has visited Staffordshire Record Office to review the spaces, COVID-19 measures, CO_2 measurements, ventilation and processes to manage visitor numbers. Based on the discussion from 1 October we will increase capacity for volunteers and visitors onsite but still maintaining social distance and management processes. Our priorities are:

- The number of visitor seats will increase from six to eleven spaces maintaining distance and ensure seats are directed away from one another. Mask wearing when moving around will be encouraged.
- Advance booking and pre-ordering of documents will continue but it will be possible to accommodate appointments on the day and some production of documents throughout the day.
- Volunteer spaces will increase from six to eight. Remote volunteering will continue to be supported.
- Small scale events with twelve spaces and workshops with eight spaces will be resumed. Online talks will continue to be offered.
- Recruit Project Officer to deliver Pandemic War Diary project.

Appendix 6

People

Since October 2020 the Health & Safety Team have continued to support all core council businesses and education/early years establishments to manage the impact of Covid-19, alongside contributing to the vaccination management of Social Care & Health staff.

In addition, the team have developed vaccination and lateral flow testing management arrangements, agreeing this with the Trade Unions implementing in February 2021.

The team have been managing local outbreak control throughout the county for education and early years establishments, along with supporting the council's own workforce with local outbreak control management. During this time there have been 1036 settings who have experienced Covid-19 impacts at least once and many of the schools several times during the last 12 months. Several of the SCC residential care homes, children residential, frontline C&F and H&C teams and workplaces have had to manage Covid -19 cases and outbreaks.

The team continues to manage local outbreak through the current 3rd wave.

A paper has been drafted, presented and agreed with SLT focused on 'Lifting Lockdown' and the readiness of our buildings to support this. SLT have agreed to retain current Covid building arrangements until the end of September and retaining physical changes like current ventilation standards and touchdown centres till the end of 2021, with a view to reviewing this position early December.

A webinar is planned for early July with premises managers to make sure that they're ready to meet the future increasing demand and occupancy numbers against desks that are available (there will be an expected 50/60% reduction).

A special edition of 'The Knot' was shared with staff on 15th June which included FAQ's around the lifting of lockdown, this will be reinforced with ongoing communication messages through various staff communication channels. Current messages are that SCC has been a SMART working organisation since 2017 and will continue to be so into the future – working locations are based on business need and through agreement with line mangers.

Special attention will be focused on triangulating and reporting occupancy rates with data taken from the desk booking system, card access system and the number of people connecting remotely.

In addition, Head of Property is working on an approach to working differently within the physical premises of SP1, particularly focused on using the physical space in a different way to support a SMART way of working and repurposing office space. This is a longer-term piece of work and there will not be physical changes in place for the lifting of lockdown in July.

Other actions implemented to support:
- Ongoing provision of PPE to meet increasing demand and to respond to changing PPE guidelines
- Inspection on Covid secure buildings, following up on any areas of concern or complaints raised.
- Supporting surge testing in Leek, Newcastle and Tamworth (achieving over 90% staff tested and over 70% of all pupils being tested in test areas) having a direct impact on 'breaking' the curve in Leek and Newcastle, actually reducing the impact amongst the 11-17 age group.
- Regular Head Teacher briefings and Governor webinars have been held to communicate key messages and ensure that there is a forum for concerns to be raised and answered.
- Held regular trade Union briefing sessions to keep TU colleagues aware of current impacts and how Covid-19 is being managed and to complete any required consultation.
- Updated HSW guidance in line with national guidance changes and to promote effective best practice standards
- Reviewed ventilation management with strategic property to ensure compliance with HSE guidance. Also completed webinar with school to ensure effective ventilation without compromising fire safety.
- Followed up on HSE Inspections to resolve any comments raised – Only minor issues raised by HSE as they were satisfied with our COVID Secure arrangements.
- Developed Lifting Lockdown implementation plan to support organisation during transition from 19th July Freedom Day through to winter to ensure we keep most of our Covid management arrangements to support colleagues to return to office safely and manage staff anxieties. Communication plan to support this also developed.
- Regular wellbeing webinars held to support employees working at home which have been well attended.
- Mental Health training moved to online options to maintain effective access to training.
- Maintained all wellbeing offer and support to our people to support mental and physical health.
- Completed flu vaccination programme to support vaccination

HSW service review all guidance changes daily and then revise guidance and messaging as needed.

Next steps

- HSW & Communications have session to review all messages to our people on 13th July once 19th July is confirmed.
- A paper has been drafted, presented and agreed with SLT focused on 'Lifting Lockdown' and the readiness of our buildings to support this. SLT have agreed to retain current Covid building arrangements until the 1st October, this decision will be supported with the communication of key messages and retaining physical Covid secure workplace arrangements. Current ventilation

standards will be maintained until the end of 2021, with a view to reviewing this position early December.

- A webinar is planned for 9th July with premises managers to make sure that they're ready to meet the future increasing demand and occupancy numbers against desks that are available (most premises have just under 50% capacity).
- Increase HSW refresher training for Fire Marshals, Evacuation Chair use etc has also been planned for.
- Revising vaccination management arrangements to deal with introduction of compulsory vaccinations in adult social care, care homes and staff that regularly attend these settings.
- Revise councils Wellbeing Strategy Sept 2021 onwards to include Financial Wellbeing offering and other wellbeing tailored to meet the changing needs of our people and to help new ways of working.

HSW will remain responsible for Covid Response activities in schools and SCC workplaces moving forwards as well as supporting HPB LOC for Education and Early years

Community Impact Assessment

Name of Proposal: Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy, and Organisational and Recovery Approaches

Project Sponsor (if applicable):
Janene Cox OBE, Assistant Director Culture, Rural, and Safer Communities
Kerry Dove, Head of Strategy and Digital

Project Manager (if applicable) or Lead: Deborah Sullivan, Senior Project Manager

Date: July 2021 **v1.0**

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Community Impact Assessment – COVID-19 Recovery Approach:

1.   Introduction:

1.1.   This is a CIA on Staffordshire County Council's **approach to the planning and recovery from COVID-19**. It builds upon a CIA produced in September 2020 which considered initial impacts of COVID-19 on our communities, the economy and organisation. The recovery process will take an extended period, and as such this CIA will be updated in line with Cabinet decisions and updates where appropriate. It will also be appropriate for separate individual CIAs to be produced when substantial proposals are made.

2.   COVID-19 – Overview:

2.1.   COVID-19 continues to circulate around the world and in the UK. As of 12 July 2021, there have been 5,155,243[1] confirmed cases and 128,431 deaths in the UK. Within Staffordshire, as of 12 July 2021, there have been 73,121 confirmed cases and the number of deaths up to 2 July 2021 is 2,707. The below table shows that East Staffordshire has experienced both the highest number of cases and highest number of deaths. Over the course of the pandemic the hardest hit district has changed from one to another. Please note that the figures include cases from care homes and prisons and numbers of these vary from district to district – South Staffordshire has a disproportionately large percentage of the prison population.

Area name	Cumulative lab-confirmed cases	Cumulative Rate	Cumulative Deaths
Cannock Chase	8240	8177.7	303
East Staffordshire	11282	9421.0	468
Lichfield	8193	7821.0	324
Newcastle-under-Lyme	10621	8205.3	407
South Staffordshire	9932	8833.5	305
Stafford	10304	7505.8	371
Staffordshire Moorlands	7029	7140.8	302
Tamworth	7520	9804.9	227
Staffordshire	**73121**	**8313.4**	**2707**

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[1] Cases in the UK | Coronavirus in the UK (data.gov.uk)

2.2. The UK has had a number of COVID-19 restrictions placed upon it since the first national 'lockdown' was imposed in late March 2020. In July 2020 most 'lockdown' restrictions were lifted, however in September 2020 restrictions were tightened and a patchwork of local restrictions were imposed across England. Two further 'lockdowns' were imposed in England in November 2020 and January 2021.

2.3. In March 2021, England began a phased exit out of 'lockdown'. This consists of a four-step plan[2], forming part of the Government's wider roadmap to 'cautiously but irreversibly' ease restrictions. In July 2021 England moved to step 4 of the roadmap with the removal of all legal limits on social contact but with the warning from Government that the pandemic is not over and to proceed with caution.

2.4. A successful UK vaccination programme is a key factor in enabling the remaining restrictions to be lifted. As of 12 July 2021, a total of 80,795,852 vaccinations have been given in the UK, with 45,923,721 being first doses and 34,872,131 being second doses.

3. Staffordshire response to Covid-19:

3.1. Staffordshire continues to respond strongly to the pandemic and will maintain Covid defences such as testing, contract tracing and outbreak management. This will likely be the case for the remainder of 2021/22 and possibly longer-term, with the duration and capacity of defences varying dependant on the severity of outbreaks.

3.2. Staffordshire has made good progress with the vaccination programme with more than two thirds of the adult population having received two doses. This ranges from >90% of over 50s down to <25% of those aged 18-30. The success of the vaccination programme means that the future course of the pandemic is more predictable and more optimistic.

3.3. Staffordshire has a sophisticated testing programme that provides a range of testing options to suit the needs of the resident. Community, surge, at-home and workplace testing have all played a key role to identify the virus in Staffordshire and to assist the County in its outbreak response.

3.4. We have worked closely with our multi-agency partners across the public sector to respond to Covid-19, strengthening existing relationships and developing new ways of working where required. We have also worked closely with our communities, including the local VCSE sector, who have been vital in supporting our response. Through the Council's Recovery work and our recently agreed Communities Delivery Plan 2021/22, we will continue to learn from the response to the pandemic and work together to empower our residents to support themselves and each other.

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[2] COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 (Summary) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

4.   Summary of Engagement

4.1.   At the heart of all our recovery plans and activities is considering and understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on our residents and communities. As recommended in previous CIAs, the Council undertook a COVID-19 Residents' Survey to understand how the pandemic has affected the people of Staffordshire and their views on priorities for recovery. Between August and September 2020, we received more than 3,900 responses to the survey. This is the largest response to a cross-cutting survey in some time.

4.2.   Findings show that almost two thirds (63%) experienced an overall negative impact on life, compared with 12% who reported a positive impact. Further findings include:

- The overall negative impacts experienced include not seeing friends and family, being unable to travel and being worried about vulnerable friends and family.

- The overall positive impacts experienced include saving money, spending more time outdoors and / or with immediate family, however those with disabilities / long-term medical conditions are less likely to have experienced the latter two positive impacts

- Over half of residents increased their use of digital by doing more online shopping and chatting more online.

- Over half of residents provided support to others and almost all of these people indicated that they were willing to continue.

- Some of the greatest concerns looking forward include the recovery of the local economy, the impact on the environment / climate, mental health and wellbeing, and access to health care.

4.3.   A further COVID-19 residents survey is due to take place in August and September 2021 to ensure the County Council continues to listen to residents to understand how the pandemic continues to affect the people of Staffordshire.

5. Emerging Recommendations

5.1. Based on the updated assessment below, this CIA makes the following overarching recommendations in order to continue supporting the recovery process:

- **Engagement** – Ensure the results of the previous and future Covid-19 surveys are considered when developing recovery plans, business plans, and new Strategic Plan.

- **Mitigations** – Ensure the mitigations set out in this CIA continue to be delivered and are aligned as appropriate to minimise the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on residents with protected characteristics.

- **Contingency planning** – Ensure all contingency planning is updated in the event of further waves of the pandemic.

- **CIAs** – Produce individual CIAs if further significant changes to community-related services are proposed.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – Use this section to identify if the proposal will impact on our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 for both residents and staff. In summary, those subject to the general equality duty must have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups.
Please consider:
- Who is currently using the service, across the protected characteristics?
- What do we know about their experiences and outcomes?
- What relevant information is available from the Census and population trends data?
- What were the findings of the engagement/consultation?
- Is there any relevant national, regional and/or local sources of research/evidence available?
- Is there any relevant information from partners or voluntary, community, social enterprise organisations?
- What is the analysis of the impact on those with relevant protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations

• **Race**	All	People of all ethnicities will continue to benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• Evidence has demonstrated that some ethnic groups are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, being severely ill and dying from COVID-19.
			• Risks to BAME groups will continue to be monitored as restrictions lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.
				• SCC have and will continue to support all residents, including extra measures for ethnic minorities where necessary and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by:
				  ○ Managing local outbreaks, particularly in communities with high numbers of BAME
				  ○ Provision of Public Health IAG in accessible way ensuring residents whose first language is not English are fully informed
				  ○ Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
				  ○ Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				
				• Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support BAME communities during recovery including the Community Champions programme in Burton to engage with

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				local communities and promote vaccine uptake
				
				• In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place for BAME communities, particularly if:
				  o New variants pose a specific concern
				  o Council services have to reduce/shut
				
				• Consider lessons learnt from Covid-19 when developing our Diversity and Inclusion Objectives, and strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and community on diversity and inclusion issues

• **Disability**	All (in particular people over 70 with long-term conditions)	People with disabilities will continue to benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• Evidence has demonstrated that people with disabilities have been at greater risk from COVID-19, due to access to services, isolation and digital exclusion. However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risk greatly reduces.
			
			• Risks to disabled people will continue to be monitored as restrictions fully lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.
				• SCC have and will continue to support people with disabilities where necessary and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, for example:
				  o Managing local outbreaks
				  o Provision of Public Health IAG in accessible way e.g. for people with learning disabilities, the visibly impaired, residents who are isolated and/or digitally excluded as a result of a disability, are fully informed

				- o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission - o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme - o Targeting take-up of vaccinations - o Continue to ensure the implications of disabled people are considered in the redesign of all services and measures are in place in community assets as part of recovery. • Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support people with disabilities during recovery, for example: - o To support digital inclusion, the SEND Adult Learning Disability team have been consulting residents with disabilities and their carers online during the pandemic. The libraries have introduced 'digital buddies' to provide phone support for digital skills. The Digital Device Recycling scheme has been introduced to benefit residents most likely to be at risk of digital exclusion. - o The Supportive Communities programme has provided communities with information, advice and guidance and linked them to voluntary and local community resources.

				o Community Help Points have been launched in community venues to provide a non-digital information/signposting offer. • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Council services have to reduce/shut
• **Sex**	All	People of all genders will continue to benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• While both genders are affected by COVID-19, evidence shows that men are more likely to be severely ill and/or die from COVID-19, particularly those in older age groups. • Services that support each sex that are usually provided in community assets, together with services that are used by higher numbers of women pose risks when lockdowns/restrictions are in place, e.g. breastfeeding support groups, alcoholism support groups, domestic abuse support. • However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risk greatly reduces.	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations • Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support families during recovery, including: o Health and Wellbeing provision o Facilitating 'family time' for children in our care o Facilitating virtual Family Hub Offer

			• Risks will continue to be monitored as restrictions fully lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.	• In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if:
				  o New variants pose a specific concern
				  o Council services have to reduce/shut

• **Age**	All (in particular older people, including those with long-term conditions, and children and young people).	People of all ages will benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• All age groups are at risk of COVID-19; however, evidence shows that older age groups and younger people have been at greatest risk.
			
			Older people:
			
			• Older people are at greater risk of being severely ill/dying from COVID-19.
			• Older people also suffer wider implications of lockdowns / restrictions e.g. isolation and loneliness, digital exclusion, care services
			• However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risk greatly reduces. Older people have also been prioritised for vaccinations which has reduced risk.
			• Risks will continue to be monitored as restrictions fully
				• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, for example:
				  o Managing local outbreaks
				  o Provision of Public Health IAG, particularly those who are elderly and digitally excluded
				  o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
				  o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				  o Targeting take-up of vaccinations, particularly to younger age groups
				  o Engage with schools to address specific issues
				
				• Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support older people during recovery, for example:
				  o The libraries have introduced 'digital buddies' to provide phone support for digital skills. The Digital Device Recycling scheme has been introduced to benefit

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lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.

Younger people:

- Younger people are most at risk of lockdowns / restrictions, particularly those who are vulnerable, have SEND / disabilities, have low educational attainment, depend upon Council/care services/support.
- There is increasing evidence that younger people may be more at risk of long Covid and less likely to take up the vaccine.
- There is also increasing evidence that young people may suffer long term mental health issues associated with isolation in first lockdowns and anxiety regarding educational attainment and the ending of isolation for under 18s / ending of school bubbles
- Younger people also have specific risks associated with COVID-19, including the impact of lockdown on vulnerable families and the longer-term impact of social isolation on young people, their education and mental / physical health.

residents most likely to be at risk of digital exclusion.
- o The Supportive Communities programme has provided communities with information, advice and guidance and linked residents to voluntary and local community resources.
- o Community Help Points have been launched in community venues to provide a non-digital information/signposting offer.

- Specific programmes of work are also taking place that will support children, young people and families during recovery, including:
  - o Facilitating Family Time for children in our care and the Virtual Family Hub offer.
  - o We are continuing to engage with young people through our VCSE Strategic Capacity Building partnership contract, which includes engaging with and representing the views of young people across the county. This includes the Wellbeing and Health Action Map (WHAM) plan, a resource that helps support young people to reflect and learn about their own emotional health and wellbeing and develop their own plan to improve it.

				However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risks reduce, however risks should continue to be monitored and mitigations put in place where necessary	In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: ○ New variants pose a specific concern ○ Council services have to reduce/shut
• **Religion or Belief**	All	People of all religions and beliefs will benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• COVID-19 lockdowns / restrictions impacted upon people wishing to attend religious services / ceremonies and practice their faith • However, as restrictions have lifted community assets have reopened	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: ○ Managing local outbreaks ○ Provision of Public Health IAG ○ Contract tracing to reduce further transmission ○ Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme ○ Targeting take-up of vaccinations • Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support communities during recovery including the Community Champions programme in Burton to engage with communities and promote vaccine uptake • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if:

				o New variants pose a specific concern o Community assets have to shut
• **Gender Reassignment**	All	People who have undergone gender reassignment or are transitioning will benefit from the recovery of Council services and assets.	• People who have undergone gender reassignment or are transitioning are potentially at greater risk of physical and mental health issues due to less support being available during COVID-19 lockdowns / restrictions to services • However, as restrictions have lifted the risk reduces.	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to support/health services are reduced
• **Sexual Orientation**	All	People of all sexual orientations will benefit from the recovery of Council services and assets	• LGBT people are potentially at greater risk of mental health issues due to less support being available during COVID-19 lockdowns / restrictions to services • However, as restrictions have lifted the risk reduces.	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme

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				o Targeting take-up of vaccinations • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to support/health services are reduced
• **Pregnancy and Maternity**	All	Pregnant women will benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets	• Services that support pregnant women that are usually provided in libraries and children's centres (e.g. mother's support groups, breastfeeding support groups etc) have not been fully accessible during lockdowns / restrictions • However, as restrictions have lifted and support services have resumed the risk has decreased. There is a risk that pregnant women may feel anxious about being vaccination and this and other potentially risks should be monitored	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations particularly to pregnant women • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to support/health services are reduced

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• **Marriage and Civil Partnership**	All	The recovery of Council services and assets will benefit marriages and civil partnerships where appropriate.	• Whilst national lockdowns / restrictions have affected weddings and civil partnership ceremonies, there are no specific issues that impact upon people who are married or in a civil partnership	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations o Communications to people/businesses to take personal responsibility to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 during large social gatherings such as weddings • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to services are reduced
• **Impact on SCC Staff**	All staff	The recovery of Council services and assets will allow staff to return to Council buildings where appropriate and safe to do so.	• SCC have and continue to support staff to work in a way that suits individual needs and circumstances in order to manage risks to the workforce, however risks should continue to be monitored particularly as restrictions are lifted and the	• SCC have and will continue to ensure staff feel safe and confident about how and where they work. • There are restrictions and safety measures in place for people who wish to visit the workplace. • There is ICT equipment available and support for people who wish to work from home.

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			Council reviews its working arrangements for staff, consideration should be given to: • Staff who wish to continue to work at home but are being strongly encouraged to return to the office • Staff who wish to return to the office but feel anxious doing so • Staff whose mental well-being has been affected due to increased and continued working from home	• Staff should be continually reminded of the mental health support available e.g. ThinkWell and MindKind • Workplace COVID-19 restrictions remain in place until October 2021. This will be reviewed in September and it is recommended that risk to staff continues to be considered during any decision making on working arrangements.
			• Some staff continue to be disproportionately pulled into the Covid-19 response risking increased stress levels and long working hours.	• Ensure SLT monitor and manage capacity/workload within teams who are responding to Covid-19 • Encourage staff to take their annual leave

• **Communities / localities**	Districts with higher proportion of older people.
	
	Districts with higher levels of deprivation and unemployment.
		The recovery of Community assets and services has taken place in each district, and will allow communities to access more support services, leisure and cultural activities.	• The risks have been reduced due to targeted measures taking place in specific localities e.g.
			  ○ Managing local outbreaks
			  ○ Provision of Public Health IAG
			  ○ Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
			  ○ Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				• SCC have and will continue to support communities / localities and build confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by:
				  ○ Managing local outbreaks
				  ○ Provision of Public Health IAG
				  ○ Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
				  ○ Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				  ○ Targeting take-up of vaccinations

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			○ Targeting take-up of vaccinations
			
			• Risks should continue to be monitored and mitigations put in place in specific localities as necessary
			
			• The VCSE sector has been vital to supporting communities to recover from Covid-19. However, national evidence has shown that the VCSE sector is facing increasing demand and reducing resources. Parts of the VCSE sector will be at increased risk, and the sector will continue to need supported to recover and remain sustainable.
				○ Communications to people/businesses to take personal responsibility to help reduce the risk of COVID-19
				○ Provide capacity building support for the VCSE sector affected by Covid-19 through the Communities Delivery Plan. This will include the VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership, Do-It Staffordshire, Covid-19 fund etc.
				○ Encourage individuals to continue to 'do their bit' within their communities
				
				• In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if:
				  • New variants pose a specific concern
				  • Access to services are reduced

• **Economy**	Districts with higher levels of deprivation and unemployment. Local businesses and skills providers	The recovery of Council services and assets is allowing SCC to provide greater levels of support for employment, skills, infrastructure and businesses which is aiding the economy	• Some communities in Staffordshire have been more impacted than others and this will have implications for recovery (e.g. East Staffordshire recording the highest number of COVID-19 related and excess deaths, Cannock Chase and Tamworth reporting the	• Identify financial implications arising for skills provider's economic viability • SCC to support businesses to build confidence whilst remaining responsible and cautious as final restrictions lift to ensure premises remain open to support the economy

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		Supporting the recovery of town centres and businesses is supporting communities and economic recovery and the further lifting of all restrictions will aid this further	highest unemployment rates in Staffordshire). • Business sectors that are at risk following COVID-19 include retail, wholesale, and manufacturing. Communities that are most reliant on these areas of business (such as Staffs Moorlands and Tamworth) will potentially see a higher level of impact. • Economic viability of skills providers is at risk.	
• **Environment**	All	The use of countryside and green spaces significantly increased when lockdowns / restrictions were in place, and people continue to utilise this resource which aids mental and physical health and well-being	• COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown has resulted in improvements to the environment (lower emissions etc) – however the recovery of services and end to restrictions may result in emissions going back to pre-lockdown levels • Transport is a key constraint for volunteers on the Rights of Way Network which is impacting on service delivery • Volunteers at country parks / rights of way may be anxious about returning to volunteer which could result in a constraint to delivery • Increased use of countryside may impact negatively upon the natural environment	Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support the environment during recovery, including: • Continuing to support the use of country parks and public rights of way with added Marshalls in place during busy periods to help manage safety • Provision of new play areas at Cannock Chase and Chasewater • Taking opportunities to secure funding to provide improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure due to a rise in levels during the pandemic • Exploring options to increase the number of Rights of Way volunteers As recovery continues, it is recommended that consideration also be given to:

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				• The balance between use of countryside spaces for health reasons and the impact upon the natural environment • Promotion of green travel / climate change measures to ensure emissions do not go back to pre-lockdown levels

Community Impact Assessment

Name of Proposal: Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy, and Organisational and Recovery Approaches

Project Sponsor (if applicable):
Janene Cox OBE, Assistant Director Culture, Rural, and Safer Communities
Kerry Dove, Head of Strategy and Digital

Project Manager (if applicable) or Lead: Deborah Sullivan, Senior Project Manager

Date: July 2021 **v1.0**

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Community Impact Assessment – COVID-19 Recovery Approach:

1.   Introduction:

1.1.   This is a CIA on Staffordshire County Council's **approach to the planning and recovery from COVID-19**. It builds upon a CIA produced in September 2020 which considered initial impacts of COVID-19 on our communities, the economy and organisation. The recovery process will take an extended period, and as such this CIA will be updated in line with Cabinet decisions and updates where appropriate. It will also be appropriate for separate individual CIAs to be produced when substantial proposals are made.

2.   COVID-19 – Overview:

2.1.   COVID-19 continues to circulate around the world and in the UK. As of 12 July 2021, there have been 5,155,243[1] confirmed cases and 128,431 deaths in the UK. Within Staffordshire, as of 12 July 2021, there have been 73,121 confirmed cases and the number of deaths up to 2 July 2021 is 2,707. The below table shows that East Staffordshire has experienced both the highest number of cases and highest number of deaths. Over the course of the pandemic the hardest hit district has changed from one to another. Please note that the figures include cases from care homes and prisons and numbers of these vary from district to district – South Staffordshire has a disproportionately large percentage of the prison population.

Area name	Cumulative lab-confirmed cases	Cumulative Rate	Cumulative Deaths
Cannock Chase	8240	8177.7	303
East Staffordshire	11282	9421.0	468
Lichfield	8193	7821.0	324
Newcastle-under-Lyme	10621	8205.3	407
South Staffordshire	9932	8833.5	305
Stafford	10304	7505.8	371
Staffordshire Moorlands	7029	7140.8	302
Tamworth	7520	9804.9	227
Staffordshire	**73121**	**8313.4**	**2707**

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[1] Cases in the UK | Coronavirus in the UK (data.gov.uk)

2.2. The UK has had a number of COVID-19 restrictions placed upon it since the first national 'lockdown' was imposed in late March 2020. In July 2020 most 'lockdown' restrictions were lifted, however in September 2020 restrictions were tightened and a patchwork of local restrictions were imposed across England. Two further 'lockdowns' were imposed in England in November 2020 and January 2021.

2.3. In March 2021, England began a phased exit out of 'lockdown'. This consists of a four-step plan[2], forming part of the Government's wider roadmap to 'cautiously but irreversibly' ease restrictions. In July 2021 England moved to step 4 of the roadmap with the removal of all legal limits on social contact but with the warning from Government that the pandemic is not over and to proceed with caution.

2.4. A successful UK vaccination programme is a key factor in enabling the remaining restrictions to be lifted. As of 12 July 2021, a total of 80,795,852 vaccinations have been given in the UK, with 45,923,721 being first doses and 34,872,131 being second doses.

3. Staffordshire response to Covid-19:

3.1. Staffordshire continues to respond strongly to the pandemic and will maintain Covid defences such as testing, contract tracing and outbreak management. This will likely be the case for the remainder of 2021/22 and possibly longer-term, with the duration and capacity of defences varying dependant on the severity of outbreaks.

3.2. Staffordshire has made good progress with the vaccination programme with more than two thirds of the adult population having received two doses. This ranges from >90% of over 50s down to <25% of those aged 18-30. The success of the vaccination programme means that the future course of the pandemic is more predictable and more optimistic.

3.3. Staffordshire has a sophisticated testing programme that provides a range of testing options to suit the needs of the resident. Community, surge, at-home and workplace testing have all played a key role to identify the virus in Staffordshire and to assist the County in its outbreak response.

3.4. We have worked closely with our multi-agency partners across the public sector to respond to Covid-19, strengthening existing relationships and developing new ways of working where required. We have also worked closely with our communities, including the local VCSE sector, who have been vital in supporting our response. Through the Council's Recovery work and our recently agreed Communities Delivery Plan 2021/22, we will continue to learn from the response to the pandemic and work together to empower our residents to support themselves and each other.

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[2] COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 (Summary) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

4. Summary of Engagement

4.1. At the heart of all our recovery plans and activities is considering and understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on our residents and communities. As recommended in previous CIAs, the Council undertook a COVID-19 Residents' Survey to understand how the pandemic has affected the people of Staffordshire and their views on priorities for recovery. Between August and September 2020, we received more than 3,900 responses to the survey. This is the largest response to a cross-cutting survey in some time.

4.2. Findings show that almost two thirds (63%) experienced an overall negative impact on life, compared with 12% who reported a positive impact. Further findings include:

- The overall negative impacts experienced include not seeing friends and family, being unable to travel and being worried about vulnerable friends and family.

- The overall positive impacts experienced include saving money, spending more time outdoors and / or with immediate family, however those with disabilities / long-term medical conditions are less likely to have experienced the latter two positive impacts

- Over half of residents increased their use of digital by doing more online shopping and chatting more online.

- Over half of residents provided support to others and almost all of these people indicated that they were willing to continue.

- Some of the greatest concerns looking forward include the recovery of the local economy, the impact on the environment / climate, mental health and wellbeing, and access to health care.

4.3. A further COVID-19 residents survey is due to take place in August and September 2021 to ensure the County Council continues to listen to residents to understand how the pandemic continues to affect the people of Staffordshire.

5.   Emerging Recommendations

5.1.   Based on the updated assessment below, this CIA makes the following overarching recommendations in order to continue supporting the recovery process:

- **Engagement** – Ensure the results of the previous and future Covid-19 surveys are considered when developing recovery plans, business plans, and new Strategic Plan.

- **Mitigations** – Ensure the mitigations set out in this CIA continue to be delivered and are aligned as appropriate to minimise the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on residents with protected characteristics.

- **Contingency planning** – Ensure all contingency planning is updated in the event of further waves of the pandemic.

- **CIAs** – Produce individual CIAs if further significant changes to community-related services are proposed.

Protected Characteristics:	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations

• **Race**	All	People of all ethnicities will continue to benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• Evidence has demonstrated that some ethnic groups are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, being severely ill and dying from COVID-19.
			• Risks to BAME groups will continue to be monitored as restrictions lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.
				• SCC have and will continue to support all residents, including extra measures for ethnic minorities where necessary and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by:
				  o Managing local outbreaks, particularly in communities with high numbers of BAME
				  o Provision of Public Health IAG in accessible way ensuring residents whose first language is not English are fully informed
				  o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
				  o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				
				• Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support BAME communities during recovery including the Community Champions programme in Burton to engage with

				local communities and promote vaccine uptake
				
				• In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place for BAME communities, particularly if:
				  ○ New variants pose a specific concern
				  ○ Council services have to reduce/shut
				
				• Consider lessons learnt from Covid-19 when developing our Diversity and Inclusion Objectives, and strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and community on diversity and inclusion issues

• **Disability**	All (in particular people over 70 with long-term conditions)	People with disabilities will continue to benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• Evidence has demonstrated that people with disabilities have been at greater risk from COVID-19, due to access to services, isolation and digital exclusion. However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risk greatly reduces.
			
			• Risks to disabled people will continue to be monitored as restrictions fully lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.
				• SCC have and will continue to support people with disabilities where necessary and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, for example:
				  ○ Managing local outbreaks
				  ○ Provision of Public Health IAG in accessible way e.g. for people with learning disabilities, the visibly impaired, residents who are isolated and/or digitally excluded as a result of a disability, are fully informed

				o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
				o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				o Targeting take-up of vaccinations
				o Continue to ensure the implications of disabled people are considered in the redesign of all services and measures are in place in community assets as part of recovery.
				• Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support people with disabilities during recovery, for example:
				o To support digital inclusion, the SEND Adult Learning Disability team have been consulting residents with disabilities and their carers online during the pandemic. The libraries have introduced 'digital buddies' to provide phone support for digital skills. The Digital Device Recycling scheme has been introduced to benefit residents most likely to be at risk of digital exclusion.
				o The Supportive Communities programme has provided communities with information, advice and guidance and linked them to voluntary and local community resources.

				o Community Help Points have been launched in community venues to provide a non-digital information/signposting offer. • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Council services have to reduce/shut
• **Sex**	All	People of all genders will continue to benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• While both genders are affected by COVID-19, evidence shows that men are more likely to be severely ill and/or die from COVID-19, particularly those in older age groups. • Services that support each sex that are usually provided in community assets, together with services that are used by higher numbers of women pose risks when lockdowns/restrictions are in place, e.g. breastfeeding support groups, alcoholism support groups, domestic abuse support. • However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risk greatly reduces.	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations • Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support families during recovery, including: o Health and Wellbeing provision o Facilitating 'family time' for children in our care o Facilitating virtual Family Hub Offer

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• **Age**	All (in particular older people, including those with long-term conditions, and children and young people).	People of all ages will benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• All age groups are at risk of COVID-19; however, evidence shows that older age groups and younger people have been at greatest risk. Older people: • Older people are at greater risk of being severely ill/dying from COVID-19. • Older people also suffer wider implications of lockdowns / restrictions e.g. isolation and loneliness, digital exclusion, care services • However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risk greatly reduces. Older people have also been prioritised for vaccinations which has reduced risk. • Risks will continue to be monitored as restrictions fully	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, for example: ○ Managing local outbreaks ○ Provision of Public Health IAG, particularly those who are elderly and digitally excluded ○ Contract tracing to reduce further transmission ○ Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme ○ Targeting take-up of vaccinations, particularly to younger age groups ○ Engage with schools to address specific issues • Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support older people during recovery, for example: ○ The libraries have introduced 'digital buddies' to provide phone support for digital skills. The Digital Device Recycling scheme has been introduced to benefit

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| | | | lift and if new variants pose specific impacts.

Younger people:

• Younger people are most at risk of lockdowns / restrictions, particularly those who are vulnerable, have SEND / disabilities, have low educational attainment, depend upon Council/care services/support.
• There is increasing evidence that younger people may be more at risk of long Covid and less likely to take up the vaccine.
• There is also increasing evidence that young people may suffer long term mental health issues associated with isolation in first lockdowns and anxiety regarding educational attainment and the ending of isolation for under 18s / ending of school bubbles
• Younger people also have specific risks associated with COVID-19, including the impact of lockdown on vulnerable families and the longer-term impact of social isolation on young people, their education and mental / physical health. | residents most likely to be at risk of digital exclusion.
o The Supportive Communities programme has provided communities with information, advice and guidance and linked residents to voluntary and local community resources.
o Community Help Points have been launched in community venues to provide a non-digital information/signposting offer.

• Specific programmes of work are also taking place that will support children, young people and families during recovery, including:
o Facilitating Family Time for children in our care and the Virtual Family Hub offer.
o We are continuing to engage with young people through our VCSE Strategic Capacity Building partnership contract, which includes engaging with and representing the views of young people across the county. This includes the Wellbeing and Health Action Map (WHAM) plan, a resource that helps support young people to reflect and learn about their own emotional health and wellbeing and develop their own plan to improve it. |

				However, as restrictions have lifted and Council services fully reopen the risks reduce, however risks should continue to be monitored and mitigations put in place where necessary	In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: ○ New variants pose a specific concern ○ Council services have to reduce/shut
• **Religion or Belief**	All	People of all religions and beliefs will benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets.	• COVID-19 lockdowns / restrictions impacted upon people wishing to attend religious services / ceremonies and practice their faith • However, as restrictions have lifted community assets have reopened	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: ○ Managing local outbreaks ○ Provision of Public Health IAG ○ Contract tracing to reduce further transmission ○ Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme ○ Targeting take-up of vaccinations • Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support communities during recovery including the Community Champions programme in Burton to engage with communities and promote vaccine uptake • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if:

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				- o New variants pose a specific concern - o Community assets have to shut
• **Gender Reassignment**	All	People who have undergone gender reassignment or are transitioning will benefit from the recovery of Council services and assets.	- People who have undergone gender reassignment or are transitioning are potentially at greater risk of physical and mental health issues due to less support being available during COVID-19 lockdowns / restrictions to services - However, as restrictions have lifted the risk reduces.	- SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: - o Managing local outbreaks - o Provision of Public Health IAG - o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission - o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme - o Targeting take-up of vaccinations - In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: - o New variants pose a specific concern - o Access to support/health services are reduced
• **Sexual Orientation**	All	People of all sexual orientations will benefit from the recovery of Council services and assets	- LGBT people are potentially at greater risk of mental health issues due to less support being available during COVID-19 lockdowns / restrictions to services - However, as restrictions have lifted the risk reduces.	- SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: - o Managing local outbreaks - o Provision of Public Health IAG - o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission - o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme

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				o Targeting take-up of vaccinations • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to support/health services are reduced
• **Pregnancy and Maternity**	All		Pregnant women will benefit from the safe recovery of Council services and assets	• Services that support pregnant women that are usually provided in libraries and children's centres (e.g. mother's support groups, breastfeeding support groups etc) have not been fully accessible during lockdowns / restrictions • However, as restrictions have lifted and support services have resumed the risk has decreased. There is a risk that pregnant women may feel anxious about being vaccination and this and other potentially risks should be monitored	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations particularly to pregnant women • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to support/health services are reduced

• **Marriage and Civil Partnership**	All	The recovery of Council services and assets will benefit marriages and civil partnerships where appropriate.	• Whilst national lockdowns / restrictions have affected weddings and civil partnership ceremonies, there are no specific issues that impact upon people who are married or in a civil partnership	• SCC have and will continue to support people and build public confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by: o Managing local outbreaks o Provision of Public Health IAG o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme o Targeting take-up of vaccinations o Communications to people/businesses to take personal responsibility to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 during large social gatherings such as weddings • In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: o New variants pose a specific concern o Access to services are reduced
• **Impact on SCC Staff**	All staff	The recovery of Council services and assets will allow staff to return to Council buildings where appropriate and safe to do so.	• SCC have and continue to support staff to work in a way that suits individual needs and circumstances in order to manage risks to the workforce, however risks should continue to be monitored particularly as restrictions are lifted and the	• SCC have and will continue to ensure staff feel safe and confident about how and where they work. • There are restrictions and safety measures in place for people who wish to visit the workplace. • There is ICT equipment available and support for people who wish to work from home.

			Council reviews its working arrangements for staff, consideration should be given to: • Staff who wish to continue to work at home but are being strongly encouraged to return to the office • Staff who wish to return to the office but feel anxious doing so • Staff whose mental well-being has been affected due to increased and continued working from home	• Staff should be continually reminded of the mental health support available e.g. ThinkWell and MindKind • Workplace COVID-19 restrictions remain in place until October 2021. This will be reviewed in September and it is recommended that risk to staff continues to be considered during any decision making on working arrangements.
			• Some staff continue to be disproportionately pulled into the Covid-19 response risking increased stress levels and long working hours.	• Ensure SLT monitor and manage capacity/workload within teams who are responding to Covid-19 • Encourage staff to take their annual leave

• **Communities / localities**	Districts with higher proportion of older people.
	
	Districts with higher levels of deprivation and unemployment.
		The recovery of Community assets and services has taken place in each district, and will allow communities to access more support services, leisure and cultural activities.	• The risks have been reduced due to targeted measures taking place in specific localities e.g.
			  o Managing local outbreaks
			  o Provision of Public Health IAG
			  o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
			  o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				• SCC have and will continue to support communities / localities and build confidence as COVID-19 continues to circulate and restrictions lift, by:
				  o Managing local outbreaks
				  o Provision of Public Health IAG
				  o Contract tracing to reduce further transmission
				  o Maintain its successful flexible and responsive testing scheme
				  o Targeting take-up of vaccinations

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			- o Targeting take-up of vaccinations - Risks should continue to be monitored and mitigations put in place in specific localities as necessary - The VCSE sector has been vital to supporting communities to recover from Covid-19. However, national evidence has shown that the VCSE sector is facing increasing demand and reducing resources. Parts of the VCSE sector will be at increased risk, and the sector will continue to need supported to recover and remain sustainable.	- o Communications to people/businesses to take personal responsibility to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 - o Provide capacity building support for the VCSE sector affected by Covid-19 through the Communities Delivery Plan. This will include the VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership, Do-It Staffordshire, Covid-19 fund etc. - o Encourage individuals to continue to 'do their bit' within their communities - In the event of future variants and lockdowns/imposition of restrictions, SCC will monitor impacts and ensure mitigations are put in place, particularly if: - New variants pose a specific concern - Access to services are reduced
Economy	Districts with higher levels of deprivation and unemployment. Local businesses and skills providers	The recovery of Council services and assets is allowing SCC to provide greater levels of support for employment, skills, infrastructure and businesses which is aiding the economy	Some communities in Staffordshire have been more impacted than others and this will have implications for recovery (e.g. East Staffordshire recording the highest number of COVID-19 related and excess deaths, Cannock Chase and Tamworth reporting the	- Identify financial implications arising for skills provider's economic viability - SCC to support businesses to build confidence whilst remaining responsible and cautious as final restrictions lift to ensure premises remain open to support the economy

		Supporting the recovery of town centres and businesses is supporting communities and economic recovery and the further lifting of all restrictions will aid this further	highest unemployment rates in Staffordshire). • Business sectors that are at risk following COVID-19 include retail, wholesale, and manufacturing. Communities that are most reliant on these areas of business (such as Staffs Moorlands and Tamworth) will potentially see a higher level of impact. • Economic viability of skills providers is at risk.	
• **Environment**	All	The use of countryside and green spaces significantly increased when lockdowns / restrictions were in place, and people continue to utilise this resource which aids mental and physical health and well-being	• COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown has resulted in improvements to the environment (lower emissions etc) – however the recovery of services and end to restrictions may result in emissions going back to pre-lockdown levels • Transport is a key constraint for volunteers on the Rights of Way Network which is impacting on service delivery • Volunteers at country parks / rights of way may be anxious about returning to volunteer which could result in a constraint to delivery • Increased use of countryside may impact negatively upon the natural environment	Specific programmes of work are taking place that will support the environment during recovery, including: • Continuing to support the use of country parks and public rights of way with added Marshalls in place during busy periods to help manage safety • Provision of new play areas at Cannock Chase and Chasewater • Taking opportunities to secure funding to provide improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure due to a rise in levels during the pandemic • Exploring options to increase the number of Rights of Way volunteers As recovery continues, it is recommended that consideration also be given to:

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				• The balance between use of countryside spaces for health reasons and the impact upon the natural environment
				• Promotion of green travel / climate change measures to ensure emissions do not go back to pre-lockdown levels

Group processes and interoperability: A longitudinal case study analysis of the UK's civil contingency response to Covid-19

Abstract

Our case study explored a Local Resilience Forum's (LRF) civil contingency response to COVID-19 in the UK. We undertook 19 semi-structured ethnographic longitudinal interviews, between 25th March 2020 and 17th February 2021, with a Director of a Civil Contingencies Unit and a Chief Fire Officer who both played key roles within their LRF. Within these interviews, we focused on their strategic level decision-making and how their relationship with national government impacted on local processes and outcomes. Using a form of grounded theory, our data describes the chronological evolution of an increasingly effective localised approach toward outbreak control and a growing resilience in dealing with concurrent emergency incidents. However, we also highlight how national government organisations imposed central control on aspects of the response in ways that undermined or misaligned with local preparedness. Thus, during emergencies central governments can undermine the principle of subsidiarity and damage the ways in which LRFs can help scaffold local resilience. Our work contributes to the theoretical understanding of the social psychological factors that can shape the behaviour of responder agencies during a prolonged crisis. In particular, the implications of our analysis for advancing our conceptual understanding of strategic decision-making during emergencies are discussed.

Keywords: Interoperability, group processes, strategic decision-making, emergency management, COVID-19, intergroup relations, civil contingency response, social identity

Introduction

The UK's civil contingency response to Covid-19 has involved a vast network of national and local response agencies. Therefore, a central issue has been interoperability: the extent to which Category 1 (e.g., the emergency services and local authorities) and Category 2 (e.g., public utility companies) organisations can work together effectively in evolving and complex circumstances[1]. To explore this key issue, we first outline the multi-agency structures that are central to an understanding of the UK's response to major incidents, before then turning to the literature on interoperability and decision-making during emergencies. We argue that an empirically driven theoretical model of intergroup relations is needed and therefore advance the utility of the Social Identity Approach, before presenting an analysis of the group-level factors that may have (re)shaped the relationships between local responder agencies and the government during the first year of the pandemic.

The UK's multi-agency response to major incidents.

The Civil Contingencies Act (herein 'CCA', 2004) is the major legislative framework underpinning the UK's national response to major incidents[2]. The CCA places statutory duties on Category 1 and Category 2 responders to make sure that partner agencies work collaboratively and collectively to respond effectively to emergency situations through their involvement in Local Resilience Forums (LRFs). LRFs are defined by police boundary areas throughout England and Wales, and they are mandated by the CCA to be the "…*principal mechanism for multi-agency co-operation*" in emergency situations (Cabinet Office, 2003, p. 11). Correspondingly, there is a requirement that LRFs meet at least once every six months so that the forums can act as the vehicle through which a range of CCA mandated duties can be fulfilled. According to the Cabinet Office (2003), these duties relate to a) assessing the risk of an emergency occurring and planning and preparing accordingly (through the development and maintenance of a Community Risk Register), b) maintaining and updating emergency and business continuity planning arrangements, c)

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[1] See: https://www.ukfrs.com/sites/default/files/2017-09/JESIP%20Joint%20Doctrine%20-%20The%20Interoperability%20Framework.pdf

[2] A major incident is defined in the UK by the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (2016) as "*An event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency*" (p. 8).

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communicating with the public, d) promoting business continuity, e) sharing information and f) multi-agency cooperation.

In response to a major incident, an LRF stands up a Strategic Coordinating Group (or 'Gold Command Group'). The SCG membership is determined by the Chair of the LRF and the SCG depending on the type and location of an incident. However, it usually comprises representation from the same Category 1 and 2 organisations as the LRF, as well as other invited senior officers who hold specialist expertise that will contribute to the response. The purpose of the SCG is to provide the overall strategic vision and leadership throughout the duration of the emergency. As such, membership is usually restricted to those who hold the most senior positions within a given organisation (e.g., the Chief Constable or Deputy Chief Constable usually represents the police on the SCG).

In addition to SCGs it is normative to have a separate Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) or ('Silver Command Group'). TCGs are "*…tasked with interpreting strategic direction, developing tactical plans, and coordinating actions and resources*" (Waring et al., 2020, p. 633). Furthermore, there are several Operational thematically organised sub-groups that are mobilised to deliver the strategic objectives identified at SCG level (e.g., communications). Thus, a key distinction between the LRF as opposed to the SCG/TCG is that LRFs are engaged in resilience planning and therefore draw on emergency preparedness guidance. Whereas SCGs/TCGs are established to deal with the response to an emergency/incident and are consequently steered by the Cabinet Office's 'Emergency Response and Recovery' non-statutory guidance that sits alongside the CCA[3].

Additionally, some localities in the UK have chosen to make strategic multi-agency investments in a Civil Contingencies Unit. These comprise teams of specialist planners who support the LRF in preparing for local and/or national emergency

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[3] See:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253488/Emergency_Response_and_Recovery_5th_edition_October_2013.pdf

incidents. CCUs work to support all responder agencies to meet their statutory duties defined by the CCA, to develop and maintain multi-agency plans for Category 1 responders, to provide multi-agency training for the LRF, to provide 24-hour call out capacity should an emergency event occur and to deliver underlying administrative support to the LRF[4]. Thus, there is a complex myriad multi-agency groups involved in a response to an emergency incident and it is this framework through which local authorities across the UK responded to Covid-19. Accordingly, interoperability is a key concept to which we now turn.

Interoperability and decision-making during emergencies.

Power (2018) describes that researchers' who are focused on inter-agency collaboration during emergencies draw on a body of psychological research that explores teams and groups in other contexts, most notably work organisations (e.g., Salas et al., 2005, 2008, 2018). This body of work carries important assumptions about the psychological formation of social groups and intergroup cooperation that can be defined as the interdependence perspective (see Turner, 1985). As Salas et al. (2005) outlines, there are two important aspects to this theoretical outlook: 1) that shared cognition or situational awareness is fundamental to effective interoperability but that 2) this shared cognition is defined as an aggregate of individual knowledge (Cooke et al., 2000). Consequently, as Turner (1985, p. 246) argues, from this interdependence perspective, "*a 'group' is merely the product of interpersonal relations and processes…*". Thus, whilst there is a recognition that 'team' or group-level processes and relations are crucial to an understanding of interoperability during emergencies (Power, 2018), existing research tends to focus on *individual* cognition and in particular 'biases' such as 'decision-inertia' (e.g., Alison et al., 2015; Power, 2015; Shortland et al., 2018) and the impact that these cognitive 'defects' have on intergroup cooperation, coordination, and communication.

For example, Power & Alison (2017) interviewed 31 senior commanders (from the ambulance, fire and rescue and police services) in the UK to explore the decision-making challenges that they have faced in the context of managing emergency

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[4] E.g., https://www.dorsetprepared.org.uk/about-the-lrf/the-dorset-civil-contingencies-unit/

situations. Their analysis depicted two forms of cognitive 'uncertainty': endogenous factors which related to uncontrollable characteristics of the situation such as time pressure and emotional demands, including fear. They also identified a series of exogenous uncertainties which related to the commanders' perceptions of their team(s) capacity to respond effectively including levels of communication, trust and inter-agency competition and conflict. Power and Alison (2017) go on to argue that these challenges can create a form of cognitive dissonance whereby commanders 'redundantly' oscillate between the negative consequences that might arise from both acting (to potentially save lives) or not acting (to prevent further harm).

From this interdependence perspective, a key cognitive 'bias' inhibiting effective judgements is what Alison et al. (2011) term 'accountogenic decisions'. Correspondingly, accountability is defined as "*…the process of having performance assessed by an audience or audiences with the power to reward or punish based on their appraisals*" (CREST, 2020, p. 4). Thus, the positive function of accountability is that it will encourage decision-makers to make improved judgements and outcomes. However, the negative consequences of accountability on decision-making arise from people trying to consider too much information in such high-risk circumstances as emergency situations (CREST, 2020). Due to limited cognitive capacity and load this leads to a failure to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information (Waring et al., 2013). Additionally, accountability can motivate decision-makers to protect themselves, with limited cognitive resources being "*…directed away from focusing on the incident to focusing on how other people might view actions in the future and how related punishment can be avoided*" (CREST, 2020, p. 4).

Van Den Heuvel, Alison and Crego (2012) argue that these cognitive biases can lead to a form of implementation avoidance where actions are not taken due to responders being stuck in the information gathering and planning phase. Accordingly, the potential impact can be mitigated if decision-makers effectively implement the stages outlined in the iterative SAFE-T model of emergency decision making (i.e., Situation Assessment, Plan Formulation, Plan Execution and Team Learning). Strategies to facilitate this are outlined by CREST (2020), that include: a) the importance of training to build up decision-maker experience in maximising limited cognitive resources, b) 'awareness raising' of the problems of decision inertia and the corresponding need for

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decision-makers to "…*accept the concept of non-optimality*" (p. 5), c) to encourage goal-focused thinking, and d) frequent practise and feedback to encourage efficiency and creative decision-making.

Thus, in summary, existing research on interoperability and decision-making in emergency situations emphasise the importance of 'team processes' and accountability dynamics, yet this work often focuses on individual-level cognitive processes and solutions. To explore the complex intra and intergroup relations involved in a multi-agency emergency response there is a need for a theoretical model that recognises the reality of groups as an analytical unit, to explore the group-level processes and accountability dynamics that impact on strategic decision-making during emergencies.

The importance of (inter)group processes and relations.

Davidson et al. (2020a, 2020b, 2020c) have recently argued that the Social Identity Approach (SIA) is an important theoretical framework for understanding the relations between responder agencies and government during the Covid crisis. The SIA jointly comprises Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner et al., 1987). Central to the SIA, is the idea that the self-concept is hierarchical, comparative and context specific. Accordingly, you can define yourself in each context in terms of your personal identity (as "I") or at a more inclusive level in terms of a social identity (based on your psychological group memberships, "we"). From this perspective, social identity is "…*a model of one's position within a set of social relations along with the actions that are possible and desirable given that position*" (Neville & Reicher, 2018, p. 12).

Therefore, in contradistinction to the interdependence perspective, the SIA recognises the psychological reality of the group (Turner, 1985), with group behaviour being qualitatively different from the mere aggregate of interpersonal relations and instead the outcome of a psychological shift from personal to social identity (Turner, 1982). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that groups do not operate in a social vacuum, in isolation from other groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Rather, society comprises myriad social groups that "*...stand in power and status relations to one another*" (Hogg and Abrams 1988, p. 14). This has important implications for an understanding of how

multi-agency groups such as LRFs function, since the analytical focus is on the complex and changing array of intergroup relationships of those involved in an emergency response (e.g., local stakeholders, national response agencies and government), all of whom differ in terms of status and power (Davidson et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

For example, from a SIA perspective, Davidson et al. (2021) argue that for LRF interoperability to be effective, the multiple partners must build a shared sense of identity (a sense of 'we-ness') at the superordinate level (i.e., inclusive of all people involved across organisational boundaries). In so doing, this facilitates the emergence of a new identity with shared norms, values and goals and enhances the partners' ability to work together to overcome challenges. Based on an analysis of interviews with UK Bluelight service personnel during the first wave of Covid-19, they demonstrate that 'vertical' intergroup relations (i.e., those between LRFs and government agencies) served to undermine the effectiveness of horizontal intergroup relations (i.e., between partners within the LRF). Local responders sought to mitigate this by 'widening' horizontal relationships by developing a network of regional connections to neighbouring LRFs.

These findings accord with those of the UK's Covid-19 National Foresight Group who conducted three Interim Operational Reviews between April and October 2020 (Hill et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) and a subsequent integrated report (Hill et al., 2021), all of which focused on exploring the experiences of the pandemic response from key stakeholders including members of LRFs, SCGs and government officials. They reported that national government organisations often imposed central control on aspects of the response in ways that often disrupted or challenge the preparedness undertaken locally (Hill et al., 2021).

The present study.

As the above discussion demonstrates, the UK's response to Covid-19 involves a complex multi-agency response at both the local and national level. Yet extant research and theory into interoperability during emergency situations is often focused on individual-level decision-making biases and seeking solutions to ameliorate these cognitive limitations. Accordingly, what this body of research does not tend to explore

is the complex group-level factors that (re)shape the relationships between different responder agencies and the government, especially during a prolonged pandemic. More broadly, a key limitation of emergency teamwork research is the lacuna between research and practice (Power, 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2019). Indeed, Power (2018, p. 28) concludes that to bridge this gap researchers *"…must have buy-in from practitioners operating in the real-world who can implement findings, and commitment from researchers that their research findings have contextualized and relevant application to support practice"*.

Thus, to address these limitations, we undertook a case study approach with our focus on the experience of the first year of the pandemic from the perspective of two senior responders both of whom played key roles within their Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and Strategic Coordination Groups (SCG). In so doing, we sought to advance the literature in several important ways. First, previous research (e.g., Wilkinson et al., 2019) has often utilised training scenarios to explore SCG decision-making. Whilst there is the capacity to create compelling and realistic incidents these are usually relatively small-scale and cannot compare to 'real-life' emergency management (Power, 2018). Thus, our study focuses in on the strategic decision-making of responders longitudinally and during a prolonged crisis with an evolving and dynamic political and societal context.

Second, we sought to address the gap between research and practice. Therefore, our approach was one of co-production from the outset with our interviewees not only being co-authors of this work but also informing the analysis and providing ongoing assistance with the policy impact and dissemination of this research.

Third, theoretically, we sought to move beyond individualist explanations for strategic decision-making during emergencies which focusses on cognitive biases and instead we aim to contribute to the understanding of the social psychological factors that can shape the behaviour of responder agencies during a pandemic (Davidson et al., 2021; Radburn et al., 2021; Stott et al., 2021). Specifically, the following analysis explores the complex set of vertical (e.g., between LRFs and government agencies) and horizontal intergroup relationships (between partners within the LRF) and how these group-level dynamics changed and shaped the nature of the civil contingency response that an LRF was able to deliver during the first year of the pandemic. In so

doing, there is a particular emphasis on strategic level decision-making at the local level and how the relationship with national government impacted on local processes and outcomes.

Method

Data collection.

The first, second and fifth author undertook 19 interviews, between 25th March 2020 and 17th February 2021, with a Director of a Civil Contingencies Unit (fourth author) and a Chief Fire Officer (third author), who both played key roles within their Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and Strategic Coordination Groups (SCG). Additionally, 3 interviews were undertaken with other Chief Fire Officers across this period, all of whom played senior roles in their respective LRF/SCG. This material informed the analysis and equated to 20 hours, 28 minutes and 49 seconds of audio which were subsequently transcribed. In practice, the interviews usually ranged between 30 minutes to an hour and took place every two-to-three weeks using the online platforms Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interviews took the form of a debriefing session where we explored the interviewee's current challenges and decision-making, what issues they anticipated they may encounter in the future, as well as following up on any of the issues raised in the previous interview. Additionally, we collected a range of secondary data sources including newspaper articles, research reports, transcripts of government announcements and media press conferences.

Analytic strategy and presentation of data.

The first and second authors undertook a form of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) to arrange the data both chronologically and thematically. Thus, secondary data sources were used to produce detailed timelines of key national events and issues (e.g., government announcements) and through this process we developed and grouped the interviews into three broad chronological phases or stages. Whilst there is a degree of overlap, the first phase includes the period from the advent of national lockdown in England on the 23rd of March 2020 through to the Prime Minister's announcement indicating that restrictions would be gradually eased on 10th May. The second phase then covers the period from May 2020 to the first imposition of 'tiered' localised restrictions at the beginning of October. The third phase explores the period

from October through to when England went into a further national lockdown in December 2020. Having grouped the transcripts chronologically, they were then (re)read and semantically coded to draw out key episodes as exemplars of theoretical relevance. Accordingly, there was a particular emphasis on the horizontal (inter)group relationships within the LRF/SCG and vertical (inter)group relationships between the LRF/SCG and central government agencies.

Through this process, the first and second author developed a form of 'composite narrative' (Willis, 2018) where the perspective of both interviewees (the third and fourth authors) were incorporated to produce a combined account of events. The analysis was then 'sense checked' by all authors, two of whom (the third and fourth authors) were able to draw on their considerable and ongoing personal and professional experience to interrogate and refine the content. As Willis (2019) outlines, a 'composite narrative' approach has two clear advantages: 1) it facilitates an emphasis on preserving the complicated and contextual accounts of our interviewees and 2) the narrative form "*… can help to build understanding of particular people and groups, in ways that are accessible to non-academic audiences*" (p. 477). Once an initial analytical structure was created, we met as a research team several times to discuss, refine, and adapt the analysis so that we achieved the best 'fit' with the dataset. Quotations presented within the following analysis were all taken directly from the interview transcripts and were judged to be the best exemplars of the themes generated.

Analysis

Phase 1: 23rd March to 10th May 2020
SCG leadership.
By the time of the first interview on 25th March, a Director of Public Health (DPH) had been appointed as the Chair of the SCG[5]. However, at that time one of the primary decisions involved declaring a major incident. This triggered discussions as to whether

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[5] The decision to appoint a DPH Chair was in line with the pre-planned national response to a flu pandemic. Local responders were told by government to use this guidance as the basis of their response to COVID-19.

the Chair should shift to the police[6]. There was some resistance to this idea among several of the stakeholders who wanted to declare a major incident but maintain a health led approach. This was primarily because they judged a police force led approach would be more 'command and control' oriented and therefore undermine the more collaborative multiagency approach that was already in place. To resolve the contention, the SCG compromised by developing 'trigger' plans for changing the chair depending on the emerging and evolving context (e.g., the relative salience of the maintenance of public order) and a mechanism whereby partners endorsed the chair at the start of each meeting. This was then adapted to be a decision taken at the end of the meeting to reflect the pace of the response and, if change were to occur, to provide an opportunity to brief the new postholder.

Centralised versus localised response.

A salient national issue from the announcement of a national lockdown on 23rd March was the need to identify and support vulnerable people. This immediately introduced a logistical problem for the SCG and LRF in identifying who these individuals and households were. This was initially defined via the NHS database of clinically extremely vulnerable people, but it was apparent to them that this would not be able to identify everyone at the local level. In parallel, in response to the crisis the Information Commission Office relaxed the rules it had previously imposed in relation to data sharing between local partner agencies. This then enabled the local stakeholders in the LRF to improve their interoperability by sharing data in a manner that had not been seen as possible before the pandemic. As one stakeholder explained:

> *"…the relaxation of the rules mean that I now have access to data about those people in this county who are shielded and therefore are the most vulnerable from the worst sort of outcomes from fire in their homes. Same as police, worst outcomes from a point of view of crime as an individual. A reversion back to where the rules were will mean that that will get stopped. So, that sharing and that ability to be*

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[6] Typically, the police will assume the role of the SCG Chairpersonship in an emergency where: "*There is an immediate threat to human life*; "*There is a possibility that the emergency was a result of criminal or terrorist activity*"; or "*There are significant public order implications*".
See: https://www.jesip.org.uk/uploads/media/pdf/5_Strategic_Co-ordinating_Group_Roles_Responsibilities.pdf

thoughtful about how we use the plethora of data that we have about our residents could get lost". Int. 29/04/20.

Having identified vulnerable people in the county, emphasis then shifted to establishing the infra-structure necessary to deliver food parcels to them. The LRF set up a distribution network involving a central hub with eight district centres. Each centre was then free to agree food procurement contracts locally. However, by the 1st of April it had become apparent to the SCG that the government had decided to centralise control of delivering food parcels and that as a result several locally agreed supply contracts had been subsequently lost to this central procurement process, in ways that undermined supply at the local level. Moreover, when the government food parcels subsequently arrived, they contained produce that was unsuitable for distribution to individual households (e.g., perishable items with short shelf life, 20 kilo bags of rice that required sub-division).

Food distribution was the first of several issues that formed a pattern over the course of the pandemic whereby government centralisation and micromanagement of important aspects of the contingency response disempowered the LRF's emerging ability to creatively solve local problems. For example, by 10th April, the government was coming under intense media scrutiny for the failure to provide frontline healthcare staff with adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), with the Health Secretary announcing that a 'Herculean effort' is underway to resolve the issue[7]. Within the LRF, the operational challenge again revolved around procurement. Rather than developing procurement contracts locally the LRFs were instructed by Government that Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG) would be issuing PPE directly to LRFs, with associated directives on how it should be distributed to partner agencies[8]. The SCG subsequently allocated their supplies of PPE in line with this top-down instruction only to be told within 36 hours that the guidance had changed. This placed the SCG in the difficult position of having to potentially recall and redistribute PPE stocks, causing tension between the LRF partners.

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[7] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52248423
[8] It is the SCG rather than the LRF that has a defined response role according to the CCA, indicating a level of government misunderstanding of its own legislation and guidance.

By 14th April, it was also becoming increasingly clear that nationally the admission of care home residents discharged from hospital without being tested for COVID-19 was causing outbreak clusters. Yet at the same time, deaths in care homes were not being included in the daily death figures, with several charities including Age UK warning that older people were being 'airbrushed' out of official statistics[9]. Accordingly, in response the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – a government agency responsible for regulating all health and social care services in England – was mobilised by the Government. A mission statement published on the 15th April[10] highlighted that the CQC would endeavour to utilise their national infrastructure to tackle the lack of COVID-19 testing in the adult social care sector. It also made clear that the CQC would launch a regular data collection intervention to ascertain the number of deaths within the care sector and to identify the specific *"COVID-19 related pressures – such as shortages of PPE – from services who provide care for people in their own homes"[11].*

This centralised imposition came as a surprise to the SCG, and several stakeholders felt it undermined their partnerships, with one interviewee describing the CQC on the 29th April as the "*new player in the response arm*". This concern was amplified when the CQC informed the local partners to stop providing information through to the LRF data collection cell and that instead the CQC would act as the conduit for information and access. Thus, rather than scaffolding the local response this government led national intervention created fissures in this local partner's relationships that they had worked hard to build from the bottom up through the LRF.

A third example, from late April onwards was an increasingly prominent issue nationally, Test, Trace and Isolate. Accordingly, the government appointed Baroness Dido Harding on 7th May as the Chair of the £37 billion national but privately run 'Test and Trace' programme[12]. Thus, by the beginning of May a key issue for the SCG was how the national test and trace infrastructure would intersect with their LRF response. This was especially important given that the Prime Minister had announced plans to

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[9] See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-52455072

[10] https://www.cqc.org.uk/news/stories/cqc-sets-out-next-steps-support-adult-social-care-during-covid-19-pandemic

[11] https://www.cqc.org.uk/news/stories/cqc-sets-out-next-steps-support-adult-social-care-during-covid-19-pandemic

[12] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-chair-of-coronavirus-test-and-trace-programme-appointed

significantly ease lockdown restrictions in the coming weeks. The Test and Trace system was designed and rolled out nationally but contained elements of local delivery. Accordingly, two largescale testing sites had been set up within the jurisdiction of the SCG as part of the national programme. Again, for the SCG and LRF, the issue revolved around centralised control not meeting local need. For instance, the CQC superseded local arrangements for testing by directing all care homes to apply for testing at the national sites using the government website. However, these locations had not been included on the list of test centres available to the public through 'gov.uk'. This meant that care home staff were instead being offered testing sites that were hundreds of miles away, despite substantial local capacity.

At the same time, the SCG and LRF were told that contact tracing would be devolved to the Local Authorities. Because of this, the LRF moved to create a specialist tracing operational cell which was led by a local authority. However, the LRF did not know what the contact tracing was supposed to entail (e.g., face to face meetings, Swabbing, Phone calls, etc). It was therefore extremely difficult for the tracing cell to mobilise the necessary activity and resources.

Phase 2: 10th May to 30th September 2020

Liberalisation and shifts to localised legal accountability.

It is apparent that as early as the 22nd April the SCG and LRF had reached a level of stability, refining their local response. Their strategic intentions and objectives were formalised and agreed and operational sub-groups delivering those objectives were operating with far less strategic direction necessary. This continued period of LRF 'stabilisation' coincided with a reduction in cases and deaths nationally, with the Prime Minister declaring on 30th April that the UK is 'past the peak'[13]. There was then the announcement by the Prime Minister on May 10th that there would be a 'phased unlocking' of restrictions throughout June and July (e.g., allowing meeting non-household members outside, and the reopening of retail outlets, pubs, and restaurants). This was shortly followed by newspaper revelations on the 22nd May that the Prime Minister's Chief Political Advisor had broken lockdown guidelines to drive his family hundreds of miles from London to Durham. In defending the Adviser's

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[13] See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52493500

actions, government ministers consistently evoked the notion of 'personal responsibility' and choice[14].

Thus, the liberalisation of government restrictions, change in messaging towards 'stay alert'[15] and the political rhetoric of 'common sense' and 'personal judgement' arguably formed part of a framework whereby central government were seeking to devolve the responsibility of pandemic response to local structures (e.g., LRFs) and the public (e.g., employers, employees) to avoid blame for any uptick in cases and deaths in a potential second wave[16]. This shift by government was thus seemingly about the avoidance of legal accountability and liability. One of our stakeholders paraphrased a powerful account of the situation from the perspective of a key decision-maker within the SCG:

> *I think it's like, right folks, we* [the Government] *fixed it. We're going to give it to you* [local responders] *and then when it all goes wrong, it's not our fault* [the government]*. We gave it to you in good order. It's your fault it's all gone wrong.* Int. 27/05/20.

Local outbreak control.

From as early as May 10th, the Prime Minister repeatedly suggested that England would implement a 'whack-a-mole' approach to control outbreaks in particular geographical areas, with localised public health measures being the primary response rather than a return to a national lockdown[17]. The first area to be subject to this was Leicester. On the 28th June, The Sunday Times reported that the government were considering imposing a localised lockdown in Leicester due to rises in infections[18]. By the 29th June, this was announced as policy by the Health Secretary[19], with the

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[14] E.g. https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/dominic-cummings-row-minister-says-families-should-try-their-best-to-follow-lockdown-rules

[15] The 'roadmap' towards loosening restrictions on May 10th was accompanied with a change of government messaging from the clear 'Stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives" to the near-universally derided slogan "Stay alert, control the virus, save lives".

[16] For instance, a report by the Independent SAGE group of scientists criticised the Prime Minister's speech outlining a 'return to work' strategy without providing any framework or guidance as to how that could be safely achieved. See: https://www.independentsage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/The-Independent-SAGE-Report.pdf

[17] https://news.sky.com/video/coronavirus-prime-minister-says-well-be-doing-whack-a-mole-on-local-flare-ups-11986745

[18] See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-53206506

[19] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-53229371

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restrictions (including the closure of non-essential shops) coming into force the following day[20]. To support this approach the government set up a £9 billion central agency – the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) – with the aim to scaffold the local response with this new largescale national resource[21].

However, mirroring their earlier experiences with the CQC, by the 8th July a key issue for the SCG and LRF was that there was a complete lack of clarity as to how the fledgling JBC would interface with existing response structures and thus what the JBC's precise role and purpose would be. This highlighted to our participants a continued experience of disconnect between the central and local level of the response. For instance, a key lesson they established from the experiences of local authorities in Leicester was the need for quick and operationally meaningful testing data to identify hotspots before spread becomes exponential. However, in common with responders in Leicester, our LRF found that national data gathering often did not correspond to what was needed locally. For example, the national testing data fed back into the national intelligence picture, which was not immediately available to partners within the LRF. By comparison, local testing data fed into local modelling and was immediately accessible. Moreover, the national Pillar 2 community testing data recorded a person's generic occupational data (e.g., 'factory worker'). This form of data was insufficient to enable an effective response and target local public health interventions, since there was a need for specific employment details and work addresses.

By contrast, the benefits of locally driven response to community outbreaks were becoming increasingly clear. For example, the SCG had developed a bespoke bandings 'thermometer'. This was also a 'live' and dynamic dashboard that worked on a traffic light classification system (i.e., green, yellow, and red) and enabled SCG/LRF partners to work to a shared and commonly agreed framework for how to respond swiftly to local outbreaks. The dashboard utilised both quantitative (e.g., case rates) and qualitative data (e.g., the 'look and feel' on the ground in communities) and

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[20]   https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/leicester-lockdown-rules-restrictions-confirmed-4279424

[21]   https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-politics-2020-7-government-spending-9bn-on-covid-19-joint-biosecurity-center/

allowed responders to determine what a local outbreak control response should look like based on the latest health data. The specificity of the data meant that the focus could be narrowed to specific premises or geographical areas, meaning that public health measures could be tailored to the specific circumstances and localities.

As one stakeholder made clear, the dashboard was an outcome of their effective local multi-agency partnerships and their collaborative leadership approach to outbreak management. This was highlighted in the LRF's response to two different 'types' of spikes in COVID-19 cases that occurred in August. The first example related to community transmission within households in a specific geographical area. Through access to the locally developed dashboard, the LRF and SCG were able to quickly determine that there were clusters of infections occurring within three geographical wards in the region. These clusters predominantly related to infections of South Asian families who often lived in multi-generational households. To suppress the outbreak, the local authority was able to draw on well-developed relationships with local community and faith leaders to embed these community leaders in the subsequent response (e.g., setting up testing in Mosques). Consequently, messaging for the importance of testing and maintaining social distancing was led by respected community members rather than "*unfamiliar people in suits*".

The second example related to a business premise rather than household transmission. Through social media the LRF became aware that a pub had breached social distancing rules, with hundreds of people attending over a three-day period. Unlike instances of geographical community spread, it was not immediately obvious from the data that there had been a serious outbreak since people had attended from across the LRF region and beyond. This example exposed a weakness of the national track and trace system since the central programme relied on venues collecting accurate and complete contact details of those attending. Without this information the nationally employed remote call staff did not have any other capacity to locate those who had been to the pub. Given that the pub in question had only gathered details for four people across the three-day period, the SCG had to mobilise their multiagency communications group. Accordingly, the printed press, social media and other websites were "*milked*" by LRF partners to encourage people who had been to the pub to attend a pop-up testing site created in the adjoining beer garden. Whilst the

pop-up site attracted over 1,000 people across a three-day period, by comparison the 'out-of-town' largescale national testing centre lay relatively dormant, utilising only 11% of its capacity. Therefore, this incident was subsequently fed back into the DHCLG by the LRF as a 'problem case' that emphasised the requirement for testing to be embedded within communities.

By 15th September there were increased numbers of infections across the county and the Upper Tier Local Authorities had set up Incident Management Teams (IMT) to provide specialist oversight of each significant outbreak of cases. Yet the ability of IMTs to respond and suppress infection rates was significantly curtailed due to the continued inadequacy of the national testing infrastructure. Thus, to address this issue the SCG chose to set up a local testing system to run in parallel to the national system so that the LRF would have access to data and thus be able to undertake fine-grained contact tracing. This involved establishing an independent booking system, testing locations and a workforce at considerable expense to the local authorities and competition from centralised procurement processes. As one stakeholder described, the SCG and LRF were essentially having to bypass the multi-billion-pound national infrastructure because it was not fit for local need. Consequently, they instead sought to empower and fund local ingenuity and entrepreneurialism.

> *The county council has said we'll swallow the costs, but they are eye watering. They are making a pragmatic decision about cost versus health and they are throwing money at it. We've done extraordinary* things. *We've shaken every contact tree we can get to try and find somebody with a lab. We're going internationally now to get that lab capacity. But it's madness. It is absolute madness that we are having to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on tests that should be provided. The foundation of the government's track and trace system.*
> Int. 15/09/20

Phase 3: 30th September to 31st December 2020

Political Tiers.

On 30th September, the Prime Minister warned that the UK was at a 'critical moment' with cases, hospitalisations and deaths all increasing[22]. A day later the BBC reported that a three-tiered alert level system would be deployed in England[23]. Tier 1 would be geographical areas with fewer than 100 Covid cases per 100,000 people and the prevailing national 'baseline' measures would be applicable in these areas (e.g., social distancing, facemask wearing on public transport, the 'Rule of Six'). Tier 2 would involve enhanced measures such as a ban on inside gatherings for areas where cases were above 100 per 100,000. Tier 3 would be applied to those areas with "*significantly higher rates of transmission*", with "*full lockdowns*" imposed, including closures of shops and other non-essential businesses.

By 2nd October it was already clear to our stakeholders that a Tier approach would be problematic. For instance, the LRF was aware that their geographical footprint was 'sandwiched' between two COVID hotspots from both the north and the south which contained major urban conurbations and thus areas where people travelled in and out for work. By the 14th October, the implementation issues of the Tier system were becoming more acute, with infections in the LRF's region rising. For example, there was no definition of the indicative triggers for a change in Tiers or the geographical boundary areas and how granular they would be (e.g., whether Tier decisions be made at the ward, district, or borough level).

Moreover, a key issue from the LRF's perspective was the degree to which there would be local consultation with regards to Tier decisions and who ultimately had the final decision. As it materialised, the decision for which Tier each of the two LA areas within the LRF's jurisdiction would be placed in was taken at weekly 'Bronze' level national meetings that included DPHs and officials from national bodies such as PHE. The meetings were also attended by the Health Protection Board (HPB) which had "*…a range of reporting arrangements into key elected members and political meetings*" [24].

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[22] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54362900
[23] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54371943
[24] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers#roles-and-responsibilities

With the increased prominence of the HPB, political actors were now playing a direct role in the trajectory of operational decision-making for the first time. This new political dynamic had the potential to undermine key stakeholder relations at a local level.

The SCG had achieved agreement on the stance to seek to move to a common Tier for the whole county to maintain consistency and standardisation for both organisational delivery and public information sharing and compliance. For instance, the police were concerned about the consequences of the alert level changing across the county, with officers having to enforce enhanced Tier 2 restrictions in Local Authority 'A' and Tier 1 rules in neighbouring Local Authority 'B'.

During October 2020, it was indicated that one of the local authority areas would be moving to a different Tier to others in the county. The political dynamic, which included lobbying by political representatives, led to a decision being taken outside the SCG's agreed stance, which ultimately had different impacts upon partners in the LRF. Up until this point in time, the relationships between local and national tiers had predominantly been through officer contact but this marked an added dynamic for the SCG to consider, namely the roles political representatives had now been given within response decision making.

Therefore, whilst the government had been acting independently of local responders throughout the response, this episode was an example of local responders starting to act independently of each other. This was due to the increasing political dimension of operational response decision-making which created fissures in well-established local partnerships. However, the key difference from our stakeholder's perspective was that the SCG were able to utilise their strong personal informal and formal relationships to work through their differences at a local level in a way that was often not possible nationally with government.

By the 31st October all authorities entered Tier 2 restrictions, yet on the same day the Prime Minister announced a new four week lockdown to be implemented from the 5th November. This again highlighted the lack of communication and coordination from government, with local responders finding out about the national restrictions through the media. This was experienced as completely undermining the LRF's public

messaging campaign, which focused on the move from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and the associated curbs on indoor socialising.

On the 21st November, towards the end of the second national lockdown, the media reported that the government was planning to implement a stricter Tier system in England once the national lockdown ended on 2nd December[25]. This meant that by 2nd December both LA areas were placed into Tier 3 – the highest level of restrictions – again with no prior local consultation. Instead, the JBC informed the outcome, with no input locally. As one stakeholder put it: "*We don't know the names or the faces or the roles of those people that are actually putting those recommendations in. So, that opaque* [Tier] *system is even worse than it was before*". By this point, there had already been considerable speculation in the media about the potential relaxation of restrictions during the Christmas holiday[26]. Thus, it was extremely difficult for the LRF to plan and communicate with the public effectively, with the regulations changing from Tier 1 to Tier 2, to a national lockdown, to a revamped Tier 3, to the prospect of a Christmas 'grace' period in the space of a few weeks.

Concurrency and local resilience.

Yet, despite this continuing uncertainty at a national policy level, the LRF and SCG were increasingly confident in their local preparedness to deal with concurrent incidents because of the relationships they had built up throughout the pandemic. Correspondingly, by 2nd December their approach was characterised by pragmatism and the reality that other major incidents (including, at this time the prospect of a 'no deal' Brexit) would involve the same personnel and so it was inefficient to duplicate response structures. Instead, in the event of a concurrent incident, they planned to utilise existing operational sub-groups, broadening their scope to embrace any additional impact on their remit.

Thus, the need to administer the vaccine in mid-December was not viewed by our stakeholders as a new phase of the pandemic but rather a continuation of a long-running response process, characterised by the disconnect between the national and

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[25] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/21/england-to-enter-stronger-three-tier-system-after-lockdown

[26] https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/families-allowed-meet-week-christmas-covid-lockdown/

local level. For instance, the SCG and LRF were initially informed by government that largescale vaccination centres would be set up by the military as part of a national roll-out plan. However, the local level were then subsequently tasked with building the required infrastructure. Accordingly, this was viewed as simply the latest example of initial centralised government control, followed by decentralisation to the local level once delivery problems emerged.

> [There has been]*…this pattern of behaviour that we've seen from the government, that is: put a national system in place, the national system fails, they scrabble around for a few months, and then they give it to the local level to manage when it's got too hot to handle. Now that isn't a bad thing because we can manage it locally and actually xShire's been really brave.* Int. 02/10/20

Discussion

The aim of this paper was to explore the complex group-level factors that (re)shaped the relationships between different local responder agencies and the government, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, we undertook a case study approach. From March 2020 to February 2021, we regularly interviewed two senior responders, both of whom played key roles within their Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and Strategic Coordination Groups (SCG). Through these ethnographic semi-structured interviews, we documented contemporaneous evidence of the key challenges that they faced, how they overcame these challenges and the issues that they foresaw emerging in the future.

Our analysis suggested that the LRF and SCG developed an effective localised approach toward outbreak control and a growing resilience in dealing with concurrent emergency incidents. Part of this success seemed to revolve around their capacity to build a shared sense of identity between responders at the local level and this togetherness and collaborative leadership empowered their local response (Haslam et al., 2020). Yet all the way through national government agencies imposed central control on aspects of the response in ways that undermined, duplicated, or misaligned with their preparedness locally (see also Hall et al., 2021). Therefore, our analysis cautions against an approach that seeks to artificially untangle 'horizontal'

relationships from 'vertical' relationships because the experience and decision-making of local responders during the pandemic could not be adequately understood without reference to the actions and decisions of other groups such as the government.

Our findings have implications for the theoretical understanding of strategic decision-making during emergencies. For instance, our case study has challenged the notion of 'decision-inertia' and the corresponding conceptual focus on the 'ultimate' decision-maker (Alison et al., 2015; Power, 2015; Shortland et al., 2018), at the expense of studying the complex (inter)group processes and relations that characterise emergency decision-making and outcomes (see Davidson et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021; Stott et al., 2021). For example, our analysis has demonstrated the overt centralised political control of key aspects of the pandemic response, infrastructure, and resourcing that structurally constrained and sometimes actively undermined the capacity of local strategic leaders to respond optimally. Thus, political choices, including the imposition of centralised bodies such as the CQC and JBC, negatively impacted on the outcomes that local leaders were able to deliver in ways that are not explained by those in the LRF and SCG redundantly oscillating between action and inaction. Instead, strategic level local responders were operating and navigating a complex array of intergroup relationships characterised by a continued disconnect between central government and the LRF/SCG (Hill et al., 2021). The ability for the LRF to function successfully in this context often meant that senior leaders had to skilfully navigate central response structures and agencies to empower local partner activity and entrepreneurialism.

Moreover, our analysis highlights the need to broaden the conceptualisation of accountability beyond the idea that *personal* responsibility for decision-making motivates leaders to prioritise their own self-protection from censure (CREST, 2020). Instead, our paper shows that accountability can also operate at the intergroup level – that powerful groups such as a government can operate strategically in ways that seek to offload *collective* or group-level responsibility to less powerful groups or individuals (Cronin & Reicher, 2006, 2009; Reicher, 2021). Therefore, accountability relates to relations between groups as much as it refers to how leaders handle personal responsibility under intense pressure. Accordingly, strategic decision-makers must consider and resolve (often competing) accountability concerns from a range of

different 'audiences' (c.f., Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012) or groups (e.g., 'the public', media, politicians). Our work points to the utility of exploring how senior decision-makers balance or navigate these different accountability concerns (Cronin & Reicher, 2009).

More generally our analysis highlights the value of a locally embedded and funded public health response to pandemics (Scally, 2020). For instance, the analysis showed that the LRF partners were able to utilise their pre-existing knowledge of their communities and relationships with key community leaders in ways that empowered local people to achieve key goals such as increased testing and enhanced public health messaging in virus 'hotspots'. Our findings also demonstrated the relative impotence of national 'remote' systems such as Track and Trace compared to responses that were embedded within communities. Thus, our analysis suggests that local authorities are well placed to garner public support and legitimacy for, and compliance with, public health directives. This is, in part, through their ability to position themselves as '*of*' the community and acting *for* the community (c.f., Radburn et al., 2018, Radburn & Stott, 2019; Reicher & Stott, 2020; Stott et al., 2020). What is needed is appropriate funding and scaffolding from government agencies to support these activities (Reicher & Stott, 2020).

Yet our case study additionally highlights that the UK government appear to have consistently undermined the principle of subsidiarity throughout the pandemic (c.f., Hill et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2020c), despite this being a key principle underpinning the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA). Thus, our analysis demonstrates the need to review the government's relationship to operational incident management to protect local authorities from unnecessary central interference. Much like the effective local response to outbreaks relied on the LRF empowering the public, subsidiarity should mean that central authorities scaffold local authorities by providing support for aspects of the response that cannot be delivered locally. Although rare, our analysis did highlight one example of effective centralised scaffolding. The ICO's decision to relax data sharing rules decision served to empower local interoperability and thus enabled enhanced protection of vulnerable people. Therefore, one implication of our analysis is that there should be greater flexibility for inter-agency data-sharing (Waring et al.,

2018) where the Civil Contingencies Act may 'trump' data protection issues in emergency situations.

Despite these insights, there are some important limitations to our analysis that need to be acknowledged. These relate primarily to our case study approach which is both a key strength and weakness. On the one hand, we were able to utilise unfettered and continued access to two senior responders involved in the response of one LRF to the pandemic. This meant that we were able to document and explore the key local issues and challenges as they understood them. Accordingly, we were able to relate their strategic decision-making at a local level to their ongoing relationship with government at a national level throughout the first year of the response to the pandemic. However, whilst our approach may have naturalistic generalisability – that is, the findings resonate strongly with those experiences of key responders from other LRFs/SCGs (e.g., Hill et al., 2021), equally, our analysis may be limited to the locality in which we focused on. Additionally, the voices of other key responders within the LRF/SCG we have explored may have changed or challenged the 'composite narrative' (Willis, 2018, 2019) we have presented.

Notwithstanding these caveats, our work has contributed to the theoretical understanding of the social psychological factors that can shape the behaviour of responder agencies during a prolonged and unprecedented crisis. Our paper points to the critical importance of the relationships between the groups involved – both in terms of 'horizontal' relations within local response structures and the 'vertical' relations between the LRF/SCG and government. Our case study analysis demonstrated that during the COVID-19 pandemic the UK government operated in ways that undermined the principle of subsidiarity and damaged the ways in which the LRF could mobilise to help scaffold local community resilience.

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WORK PROGRAMME – 2021/2022
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the Council's principal overview and scrutiny committee. It is responsible for co-ordinating and approving the scrutiny work programmes, overseeing the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and ensuring coherence of approach to cross cutting policy themes. The committee also has a key role in challenging progress around the Council's ambitions of running the business well.

The Committee also scrutinises those areas of the County Council's activity focused on corporate improvement. Its remit covers:

- Holding the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources of the Council to account for achievement of the overall vision of a connected Staffordshire.
- The Council's overall performance and approach to managing performance and Strategic Corporate Planning
- The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- The Council's on-going programme of improvement and transformation.
- The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic priorities
- The Council as a commissioning organisation including how it uses customer insight to drive improvements in services

We review our work programme regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the challenges facing local communities, the Council and its partners.

County Councillor Colin Greatorex
Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

If you would like to know more about our work programme or how to raise issues for potential inclusion on a work programme then, please contact Nick Pountney - Scrutiny and Support Manager – Nicholas.pountney@staffordshire.gov.uk

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
10 June 2021	Introduction to the Committee and Work Programme Planning Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Nick Pountney		
2 July 2021 Cancelled Reserved for Call In			
29 July 2021	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 1 2020/21 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon		
	Appointment of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group Officers: Carol Bloxham/Nick Pountney		
6 August 2021 Cancelled Reserved for Call in			
7 September 2021	Climate Change Annual Report and Action Plan 2 Member: Simon Tagg Officer: Clive Thomson		
1 October 2021 Cancelled Reserved for Call In			
5 October 2021	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2020/21 Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Kate Bullivant		

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2021/22 Overview and Scrutiny Chairman		
8 November 2021 Cancelled Reserved for Call In			
8 November 2021	Performance Management Workshop		
16 November 2021	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 2 2020/21 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Kerry Dove		
	Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan Member: Alan White Officers: Sarah Getley/Kerry Dove		
	VCSE capacity building recommission Member: Victoria Wilson Officers: John Tradewell/Kerry Dove		
	Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress - Update October 2021 and Way Forward Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Deborah Sullivan		
3 December 2021	Scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership		

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
7 January 2022 Reserved for Call In			
20 January 2022	Development of the Strategic Plan Member: Alan White Officer: John Tradewell		
4 February 2022 Reserved for Call In			
4 March 2022 Reserved for Call In			
29 March 2022			
5 April 2022 Reserved for Call In			
TBC	Scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership		
TBC	Equal Opportunities		Raised at 3/7/20 committee – need more equality areas in the work programme. Discussion with Chair and Vice Chairs/officers 6/10/20. Draft paper being prepared, setting out the current position from both a community and workforce perspective. Focus groups to be arranged. Following this a general refresh of Equality Objectives will be carried out. Then report to Corporate Review for scrutiny and to inform the committee of the areas which need priority.
TBC	Governance and control of arm's length companies/partners. E.g.		Item discussed with Chair and Vice Chairs. MTFS to look at financial aspects. Report requested for early 2021,

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
	Nexxus/Entrust/AMEY. Particularly in light of Robin Hood Energy/Nottingham City Council. What is out process, how is performance measured, how are contract changes negotiated, what influence do we have. Member: Philip White Officers: Helen Riley/Darryl Eyers/John Tradewell/Ian Turner		possibly January in line with MTFS findings.
TBC (deferred from 16 November)	Digital Strategy Member: Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Kerry Dove		
TBC Data Sharing			
TBC People Strategy Recruitment Smart Working/Future Office			

Items for Consideration for the Work Programme

Suggested item	Link to the Council's Commissioning Plans	Background	Possible Option
Networks – E.g. Leaders group/CE groups/LGA - how is the information shared?		Discussed at Chairs/Vice Chairs meeting 07/10/20	

Working Groups

MTFS 2021/22	**Appointment of Members 2021**	Membership • Cllr C Greatorex • Cllr B Peters • Cllr J Salisbury • Cllr C Atkins • Cllr J Pert • Cllr G Heath • Cllr S Thompson • Cllr J Oates	Observers
Climate Change Working Group		Membership • TBC	

Suggested Working Group item	**Link to the Council's Commissioning Plans**	**Background**	**Possible Option**

Membership - County Councillors	**Calendar of Committee Meetings**	
Colin Greatorex (Chairman) Conor Wileman (Vice Chairman - Overview) Gill Heath (Vice Chairman - Scrutiny) Charlotte Atkins Tina Clements Mike Davies Jeremy Oates Jeremy Pert Bernard Peters James Salisbury Bob Spencer	10 June 2021 2 July 2021 29 July 2021 6 August 2021 7 September 2021 1 October 2021 5 October 2021 8 November 2021 16 November 2021 3 December 2021 7 January 2022 20 January 2022	 reserved for call in CANCELLED reserved for call in CANCELLED reserved for call-in CANCELLED reserved for call-in reserved for call-in

Samantha Thompson Mike Worthington	4 February 2022	reserved for call-in
	29 March 2022	
	5 April 2022	reserved for call-in