

**ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL**



Council Offices,  
Urban Road,  
Kirkby in Ashfield  
Nottingham  
NG17 8DA

## Agenda

# COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel

Date: **Thursday, 3rd September, 2020**

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Time: **7.00 pm**

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Venue: **[Ashfield District Council's YouTube Channel](#)**

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# COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY SCRUTINY PANEL

## Membership

**Chairman:** Councillor David Hennigan

**Vice-Chairman:** Councillor Jim Blagden

**Councillors:**

Dale Grounds

Kevin Rostance

Dave Shaw

John Smallridge

Caroline Wilkinson

## FILMING/AUDIO RECORDING NOTICE

This meeting may be subject to filming or audio recording. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Members' Services on 01623 457317.

## SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel to be held at the time and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



**Carol Cooper-Smith**  
**Chief Executive**

## **AGENDA**

**Page**

1. **To receive apologies for absence, if any.**
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.**
3. **To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of a meeting of the Panel held on 30 July 2020.** 5 - 10
4. **COVID-19 Response and Recovery - Directorate Updates.** 11 - 40

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## **COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 30th July, 2020 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor David Hennigan in the Chair;

Councillors Jim Blagden, Dale Grounds,  
Kevin Rostance, Dave Shaw, John Smallridge  
and Caroline Wilkinson.

**Officers Present:** Lynn Cain, Ruth Dennis, Mike Joy and  
Shane Wright.

**In Attendance:** Councillor Daniel Williamson.

### **SC.1 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **SC.2 COVID-19 Response and Recovery**

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the inaugural meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel.

The Panel had been established by Council following recommendations made by Cabinet, with the purpose of reviewing the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to take an active role in respect of the Council's agreed recovery plans. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) had both welcomed this course of action.

The terms of reference for the Panel were outlined in the report including a summary of what the Council had done so far accompanied by guidance released by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the establishment of a COVID-19 related scrutiny panel.

The Chairman reiterated that he wanted the Panel to consider and make deliverable, tangible recommendations to Cabinet and did not wish to see the meetings become ineffective with unnecessary talking and little action. The Council would need to be fully prepared for a second wave of the virus should it arrive and be accompanied by the inevitable local or national lockdowns.

The Chairman particularly wished to assist local businesses as much as possible to reinvigorate the Ashfield's economy and would be paying special attention to any opportunities that may arise to offer the Council's support where needed.

Members were reminded that the meeting would enable them to consider the Council's first response to the pandemic and determine a suitable work programme for the Panel over the next four months.

Congratulations were placed on record for the amazing work undertaken by employees during the lockdown period and in particular the waste collection team, Charles Edwards, the Council's Environment and Cemeteries Manager and Helen Carlton-Ashton and the customer services team who had dealt with over 40,000 enquiries during that time.

The Vice Chairman also spoke about the resilience and care that had been shown by Ashfield's residents and all the NHS heroes that had gone above and beyond to keep the public safe. The Council had facilitated the distribution of over £18 million pounds of grant monies to assist local businesses during the outbreak and had recently commenced opening up the Council's high streets and town centres to welcome customers back and restart the local economy.

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services gave an outline of the expectations for Member-led scrutiny through the COVID-19 recovery period and reiterated that Members would play a large part in shaping the recovery and response framework. Priorities would need to be set based upon feedback from residents (and local communities) and what deliverable outcomes could be achieved within the Council's capabilities.

A request was also being made to the Leader of the Council for a COVID-19 recovery item to be placed on each Cabinet agenda for the foreseeable future, to enable the Panel to provide responsive feedback and recommendations for action as required.

The Scrutiny Research Officer screen shared a suggested work programme which outlined four potential meeting dates and topics for consideration. Members were reminded that local communities would play an important role in the District's recovery from the pandemic and Members were the vital conduit for disseminating the information/experiences from their electorate.

Members were encouraged to be proactive in seeking out the views of their residents to enable the Council to target their responses and recovery measure to those areas and people in most need. The Council's communications team would also be playing an interactive role in assisting with the publication and capture of any opportune/timely information to keep everyone fully briefed across all the Council's media platforms.

The Director of Legal and Governance and the Council's Strategic Lead for its COVID-19 response, talked through the summary of the work undertaken by the Council thus far in response to the outbreak. The Council was now moving onto its 'recovery' phase and making preparations for a potential second wave of the virus or a local lockdown if instructed by Government.

During the initial lockdown, the Council had worked with its partners to share information and endeavour to provide a uniform response to critical developments as they arose. The partnership network operated at different levels and included involvement by the Council with the following:-

### The Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum

A management group for the co-ordination of emergency planning within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The Forum was led by Nottinghamshire Police and was made up of senior managers from the principal emergency planning and response organisations.

The Forum had the responsibility for achieving a coordinated response across Nottinghamshire to any major incident within its boundaries.

### Multi-Agency Response Group

A Group that involved members from various agencies including Police, City, County and District Councils, Universities and the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

### Thematic Groups

Sitting underneath the Forum, there were currently various thematic groups dealing with various county-wide responses to the outbreak including:

Health  
Humanitarian  
Economy  
Communications  
Local Authority.

The Council has been a key player in the Local Authority Group and has met regularly to primarily facilitate the continued delivery of its Tier 1 and 2 services. The Council has been very successful at delivering these services and ensured that messages have been shared in a consistent and organised manner with staff remaining flexible, reactive and adaptive to the ever changing environment.

### ADC Incident Management Team

An internal group set up by the Council to enable Directors (all with specific COVID-19 response and recovery roles) to meet with the Council's Service Manager for Risk and Emergency Planning and Communications team, to facilitate the Council's local response to the outbreak as required.

The Council were currently working hard to prepare for a second wave of the outbreak or a local lockdown. They had been somewhat reassured however, that the structures installed and implemented for the initial outbreak had proved to be effective and resilient and would be held in hibernation ready to be reactivated if needed.

In the meantime, plenty of lessons were being learnt from neighbouring authorities and partner organisations and training sessions were regularly being held to share knowledge and ensure preparedness for any future outbreaks. The Cabinet had also recently considered and approved the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy.

The Panel acknowledged how the outbreak had significantly changed the working arrangements for staff who were predominantly working from home if able to do so. The Council's finances had also been impacted and this would be monitored closely over the coming months.

Members did concur with the Director's comments that Ashfield was in a really good position to recover from the pandemic over the longer term and that the work of the Panel would add considerable value to that recovery process. The Council had embedded the COVID-19 recovery into its Corporate Plan and had already considered the increased risks and any mitigating factors as part of its Corporate Risk Register.

A discussion took place and Members considered the following:-

Question/Comment:	Response:
Fears for second wave around Christmas in the winter months; would the Council be informed of any lockdown prior to any release to the media?	The Council's Recovery Plan allowed for early involvement with established networks, particularly the Communications Cell, which would receive early Government notification and have prepared messages ready to be released, prior to the public being informed through the usual media platforms (lessons were learnt through the local lockdown in Leicester)
The Government response in early lockdown was confusing and stressful but their communication strategy is now improving	Agreed it was frustrating at first for the Council as messages kept changing and were slow to come through. Again the Communications Cell was helpful with this issue
Now that the 'Track and Trace' testing programme is improving, Councils need to ensure they have adequate and well placed testing stations available	Testing Stations are provided by Nottinghamshire County Council and the NHS
High Streets are now really struggling and the Council needs to undertake a total review of its town centres and the local economy following the outbreak	Work is currently underway to re-open the town centres; Ashfield have received £114,527 of a Government fund initiative to assist with local town centre recovery
Mental health issues experienced by many during lockdown is a worry and the problem will only escalate over the coming months	In relation to the wellbeing of employees, the Council have introduced a raft of measures including practical advice for home-working and access to counsellors for therapy etc. to reassure and offer support as required
The amazing work undertaken by local volunteers to assist others during the outbreak	Agreed

Local retail businesses who have gone above and beyond to make their premises COVID secure to provide a safe environment for customers (often at additional costs to themselves) should be recognised	Good suggestion that can be communicated to the Director of Place and Communities for consideration. Many local businesses have also assisted with humanitarian aid (making donations to foodbanks etc.) whilst struggling financially themselves
Some shops are struggling with implementing social distancing measures and could maybe benefit from some support and guidance from other local shop owners with best practice	Another good suggestion that can be communicated to the Director of Place and Communities for consideration
Has the homeless strategy ensured that vulnerable people sleeping on the streets have received support during lockdown?	The Council have carried out over 90 homeless assessments during the lockdown and assisted with the provision of secure night-time accommodation. More funding is being allocated to ensure the problem doesn't escalate again during the winter months
Suggestion for an NHS memorial in Ashfield should be widened to honour all key workers and children who have cared for others during the pandemic and could be called 'The Peoples' Memorial'	Suggestion would be explored further at the next meeting of the Panel to be held on 3 September 2020
Request for all Directors to attend the next Panel meeting in September to brief Members on their designated area of COVID-19 response	An invite would be sent to Directors to attend the next Panel meeting on 3 September 2020
A request to invite Chief Inspector Mark Dixon and Kings Mill Hospital's Chief Executive, Richard Mitchell to a future Panel meeting to consider the successes achieved through multi-agency working during the pandemic	To be added to the Panel's Work Programme for a future meeting

Following the discussion, the Chairman summarised the views, comments and suggestions arising from the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution. He asked Members to acknowledge that the work programme would remain fluid to enable the Panel to respond and prioritise issues as they arose over the coming months and all present concurred with that course of action.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Council's initial response to the pandemic including the consequential impacts to the Council, the local economy, and its communities as outlined in the report, be received and noted;
- b) the following initial work programme for the Panel be approved to facilitate delivery of the Panel's objectives in a timely and responsive manner:-

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>Focus Theme:</b>	<b>Attendees:</b>	<b>Cabinet Update:</b>
3 September 2020	Local Recovery Themes Update and The Peoples' Memorial	All Service Directors	15 September 2020
6 October 2020	Small Business and High Street Recovery	Local Business Representatives	13 October 2020
5 November 2020	Multi-Agency Working	Police, NHS, Charities, Discover Ashfield, County Council	1 December 2020
10 December 2020	TBC	TBC	20 January 2020

- c) the Council's Corporate Leadership Team be invited to attend the next Panel meeting in September 2020 to brief Members on their designated area of COVID-19 response and recovery;
- d) an item be placed on the agenda for the Panel meeting scheduled for 3 September 2020, to enable Members to consider in more detail the suggestions for a memorial to commemorate and honour the unstinting commitment and bravery shown by all key workers and volunteers during the pandemic;
- e) Chief Inspector Mark Dixon and Kings Mill Hospital's Chief Executive, Richard Mitchell, be invited to a future Panel meeting to consider the successes achieved through multi-agency working during the pandemic.

The meeting closed at 8.23 pm

Chairman.

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY SCRUTINY PANEL</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>3 SEPTEMBER 2020</b>
<b>Heading:</b>	<b>COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY – DIRECTORATE UPDATES</b>		
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>		
<b>Ward/s:</b>	<b>ALL</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>NO</b>		
<b>Subject to Call-In:</b>	<b>NO</b>		

## **Purpose of Report**

The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel has been established by the Council, following recommendations made by Cabinet for the establishment of the Panel. The purpose of this Panel is to review the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and take an active role in respect of the Council's recovery plans.

This report includes updates prepared by members of the Corporate Leadership Team relating to the Council's Directorates and covid-specific themes. These updates focus on key themes such as Government funding of additional COVID-19 costs, housing and communities recovery, identified recovery actions, and emerging themes to guide local economic recovery in Ashfield.

## **Recommendation(s)**

Members of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel are recommended to:

1. Note the information contained in this report.
2. Consider any comments, concerns or interim recommendations for the Cabinet update.

## **Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

The established COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel ensures that dedicated and robust arrangements are in place for this unprecedented situation where the Council must ensure it performs a leading role in supporting communities, businesses and employees.

## **Alternative Options Considered**

No alternative options have been considered.

## **Detailed Information**

The first formal meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel was held on 30 July 2020.

At this meeting, Members agreed to establish a work programme for the Panel to assist the management of the Panel's agenda and the scheduling of the Panel's business. It was agreed by Members that the Panel's work programme must maintain a degree of flexibility to ensure any arising issues can be incorporated into the work of the Panel appropriately. The following focus themes have been identified by the Panel to be explored over the coming meetings:

- Local Recovery Themes Update and Key Worker Memorial
- Small Business and High Street Recovery
- Multi-Agency Working

Members also agreed meeting dates for the Panel for the remainder of 2020:

- 3 September 2020
- 6 October 2020
- 5 November 2020
- 10 December 2020

These dates have been chosen to align with Cabinet meetings through the rest of the year. The work of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel will be continually reported back to Cabinet as well as any recommendations the Panel may decide upon.

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>Focus Theme:</b>	<b>Attendees:</b>	<b>Cabinet Update:</b>
3 September 2020	Local Recovery Themes Update and The Peoples' Memorial	All Service Directors	15 September 2020
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10 December 2020	TBC	TBC	20 January 2020

## **Latest Government Guidance**

The following guidance is taken from the Government's *Coronavirus Outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do* and is up to date as of 24 August 2020.

### Recent Changes

From 15 August, the following businesses can reopen, and activities can resume provided they follow the Covid-19 Secure guidelines:

- casinos
- skating rinks
- bowling alleys
- indoor play areas, including soft play areas
- indoor performances
- remaining close contact services, including any treatments on the face such as eyebrow threading or make-up application
- wedding receptions and celebrations for up to 30 people, in the form of a sit-down meal

### Following Months

In the Prime Minister's update on progress on 17 July, he set out the next stages of restriction changes.

From 1 September:

- schools, nurseries and colleges will open for all children and young people on a full-time basis
- universities are working to reopen as fully as possible

From 1 October, if prevalence remains around or below current levels:

- audiences will return to stadiums, and conferences and other business events will recommence in a COVID-19 Secure way

In November, the Government's ambition is to scale back remaining social distancing measures, but this is contingent on several factors, including consideration of the specific challenges moving into winter.

### Still to be Avoided

It remains the case that you should not:

- socialise indoors in groups of more than two households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household) – this includes when dining out or going to the pub
- socialise outdoors in a group of more than six people from different households; gatherings larger than six should only take place if everyone is from exclusively from two households or support bubbles
- interact socially with anyone outside the group you are attending a place with, even if you see other people you know, for example, in a restaurant, community centre or place of worship

- hold or attend celebrations (such as parties) where it is difficult to maintain social distancing and avoid close social interaction – even if they are organised by businesses and venues that are taking steps to follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines
- stay overnight away from your home with members of more than one other household (your support bubble counts as one household)

It is against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces). Businesses and venues following COVID-19 Secure guidelines can host larger groups provided they comply with the law. This can include weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and funerals (which we advise should be limited to no more than 30 people), religious ceremonies and services, community activities and support groups. If attending a place or event that is following COVID-19 Secure guidelines, you should take care to limit your interactions with anyone outside of your group and you should continue to maintain social distancing from those that you do not live with. It is critical that you follow these guidelines to keep both yourself and others safe. The Government will be introducing fines for those who facilitate or organise illegal gatherings of over 30 people.

### **Local Outbreak Control Plans**

On 22nd May 2020 Government announced that as part of its national strategy to reduce infection from COVID-19 it would expect every area in England to create a Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP).

[The Nottinghamshire Local Outbreak Plan](#) sets out how local government works with the NHS Test and Trace service, so that the county is prepared to contain the virus wherever and if-ever it occurs. The plan outlines how lives will be protected using the emergency response systems in partnership with Public Health England, the NHS, the voluntary sector and the wider community.

The plans build on existing health protection roles and responsibilities as well as the specific work councils have been undertaking to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The Local Outbreak Control Plans in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is led by a joint Health Protection Board comprising the two Directors of Public Health with oversight by two separate member led engagement boards make up of elected councillors of the respective authorities.

The Plan sets out the arrangements for ongoing local surveillance and the actions that will be taken in response to local outbreaks should they occur. It is a working document and is updated regularly to reflect changes required to ensure it remains up to date and can be successfully executed during outbreaks.

In Nottinghamshire this Local Outbreak Control Plan builds on existing health protection plans already in place between Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), Public Health England (PHE) East Midlands (EM), the 7 Nottinghamshire District and Borough Council Environmental Health Teams, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (ICS) Bassetlaw ICP, and the Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has advised that the Local Outbreak Control Plan is centred around 7 themes:

1. Planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools (e.g. defining monitoring arrangements, identifying potential scenarios and planning the required response).
2. Identifying and planning how to manage other high-risk and/or complex places, locations and communities of interest.
3. Identifying methods for local testing to ensure a swift response that is accessible to the entire population. This could include delivering tests to isolated individuals, establishing local pop-up sites or hosting mobile testing units at high-risk locations.
4. Assessing local and regional contact tracing and infection control capability in complex settings and the need for mutual aid (e.g. identifying specific local complex communities of interest and settings, developing assumptions to estimate demand, developing options to scale capacity if needed).
5. Integrating national and local data and scenario planning through the Joint Biosecurity Centre Playbook (e.g. data management planning including data security, data requirements including NHS linkages).
6. Supporting vulnerable local people to get help to self-isolate (e.g. encouraging neighbours to offer support, identifying relevant community groups, planning how to co-ordinate and deploy) and ensuring services meet the needs of diverse communities.
7. Establishing governance structures led by COVID-19 Health Protection Boards and supported by existing Gold command forums and a new member-led Board to communicate with the general public.

In Ashfield, both Environmental Health Teams (Commercial and Private Sector Enforcement) are involved in outbreak planning from a strategic, tactical and operational position in the event of an outbreak. The Teams are in regular (weekly, daily and bi monthly) contact through the Chief Environmental Health Officers Group, which the Team Leaders are part of, to support planning for future COVID-19 Outbreaks within the district.

In addition to this the teams work closely with the Emergency Planning Team to plan for all eventualities in all 12 outbreak plans in place across the county. Ashfields PSE team have had significant input into training for an outbreak and scenario setting to enable this to be developed county wide.

## **COVID-19 Government Funding of Additional COVID19 Related Costs**

### Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants

As at 21<sup>st</sup> August 1,629 businesses have been paid these grants to a total value of £18.210m. This represents 98.13% of the businesses we believe are eligible for these grants. The remaining 26 businesses who we believe may be eligible for grants will be visited early next week by a Visiting Officer to check whether they are still trading and if so encourage them to apply for the grants. The Government has now closed these Grant Schemes and no payments can be made after 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

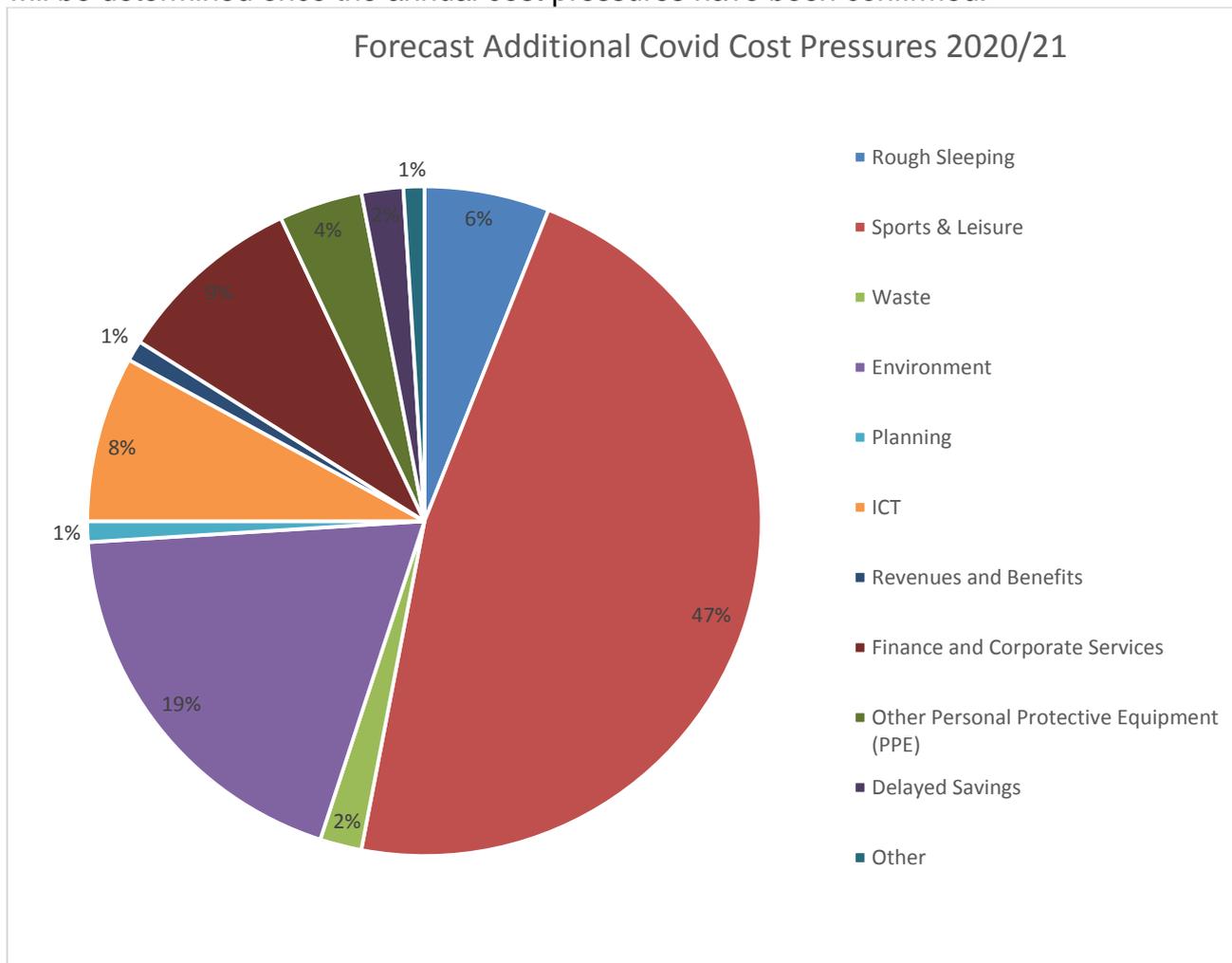
### Discretionary Grants

As at 21<sup>st</sup> August 68 businesses have been paid a total of £492,302. This represents 45.64% of the £1,078,750 Discretionary Grant funding allocated to us. The Discretionary Grant Scheme closed at

midnight on 17<sup>th</sup> August and in total 209 applications were received. To date 72 applications have received no award as they did not meet the eligibility criteria. Additional information has been requested from 32 applicants in order for the Panel to make a decision on eligibility and 37 applications are currently being assessed.

The Discretionary Grants Panel is meeting regularly and will process remaining applications and make payment to those businesses who are eligible for grant as soon as possible but by no later than the end of September 2020.

The Government has (to date) issued the Council with 3 tranches of Covid-19 funding support which total £1,611,494 to meet the forecast additional costs relating to the pandemic. The Council is required to submit monthly returns which indicate how this funding is being / will be used. The most recent return shows the key pressure areas as shown below. The actual allocation of the funding will be determined once the annual cost pressures have been confirmed.



### Explanation of Key Expenditure Pressures

- Rough Sleeping – accommodation costs of Rough Sleepers in the District. In accordance with Government guidance these are reported gross of any Homelessness grant.
- Sport & Leisure – Additional forecast costs of funding our Leisure Centres as the operator has had to scale back provision to meet social distancing requirements and this is impacting on income. Government is looking into what direct funding might be provided to the Leisure sector.
- Waste – Additional costs of cleaning up the District.
- Environment – Hire of vehicles to allow social distancing.

- Planning – Maid Marion Line consultancy re-work to reflect the impact of Covid-19.
- ICT – Additional costs of IT equipment and telephony costs due to the significant need to work agilely where possible.
- Revenues & Benefits – overtime payments to process Covid-19 business grants and manage increased number of Universal Credit applications and changes in circumstances.
- Finance & Corporate Services – Security costs for the Investment Property and legal, property agent costs and stamp duty incurred in transfer of tenancy.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – forecast additional costs of PPE required as a consequence of the pandemic.
- Delayed Savings – delays in the transfer of the Building Control service to Erewash Council impacting the planned savings for 2020/21.
- Other – Letters to residents and businesses and a £10k allocation of funding to the Voluntary Sector to provide additional support to Ashfield residents.

### COVID-19 Government Funding for Loss of Income from Sales, Fees and Charges

The Government recently announced that it will reimburse Council's for lost income from sales, fees and charges (only) on the following basis:

- i) The first 5% loss to be met by the Council
- ii) The remaining 95% loss to be funded £0.75p in every £1.00 by the Government and £0.25p in every pound by the Council.

Although details of the Scheme are currently awaited, we are aware that the reimbursement of lost income from Investment Properties and Commercial Units across the District are not recoverable. The estimated loss of income from the hotel owned by the Council where the former tenants (Shearings) went into liquidation is £408k for 2020/21. A new Tenant (Vine Hotels) was secured in July 2020. The financial impact of the change in tenancy has been factored into a revision of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Currently it is forecast that we will receive the income relating to our Industrial Units by the end of March 2021. Some businesses have taken up the offer of rent deferral agreeing to bring their rent accounts up to date by 31 March 2021.

### Collection Fund – Forecast Losses

- Business Rates – the current forecast loss of Business Rates for the year is £2m of which the Council's share is £800k (40%).
- Council Tax – the current forecast loss of Council Tax is £2.48m of which the Council's share is approximately £223k (9%). The £2.48m includes the forecast loss of £200k from new build residential properties factored into the budget for 2020/21. The impact of the pandemic has significantly scaled back progression.

The above forecasts are reviewed monthly and updated information will be brought back to this Committee as required.

### Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- Rent Income from Council dwellings – It is forecast that rent arrears will increase by £420k by the end of 2020/21.

- Rent income from HRA Community Centres – is forecast to be a pressure of £27k for the year due to enforced closure of these facilities as a consequence of the pandemic.
- Void Properties – there is a forecast loss of income of £57k for the year due to the delays in re-letting void properties as a consequence of the pandemic.
- HRA Other – a forecast additional cost of £86k for additional PPE (£28k) and extra expenditure to maintain supplier contracts (£58k).

It is as yet unclear whether the Covid-19 grant funding can be used to mitigate financial pressures which are HRA related. Guidance on this has been requested and is still awaited.

## **Housing and Communities Recovery**

Building from the humanitarian effort which saw a truly cross council approach to supporting the most vulnerable residents within the district, comes the housing and communities recovery plan which builds on the support networks which were significantly enhanced during the major lockdown phase.

The role the humanitarian group played during the lockdown should be viewed as a significant triumph for Ashfield District Council since none of the employees involved were carrying out what they would class as their 'day job', whilst some of the tasks expected of the group such as setting up mechanisms for food parcel delivery and/or housing all street homeless individuals within a matter of days were without any precedent or procedure.

It would also not be out of place to say that Ashfield got a handle and vision of the task very early in comparison to others.

Within the recovery theme itself a number of the services involved have had to deal with either delays and/or backlogs before returning back to near normal service provision, whilst allowing for social distancing and health and safety procedures, whilst others are having to adjust to legacy issues which may take some months to get back on track and/or their focus and method of operation have changed quite significantly as a result and will not return to the same pre-covid methodology again. The following is a brief snapshot across the sections;

### Housing Repairs

The service maintained emergency cover throughout and also did outstanding working in carrying on with its legal duty to service gas appliances. In addition unlike many other authorities and associations, work also carried on in empty (void) properties meaning that properties were continually available for homelessness and domestic violence cases.

Recovery began on 1<sup>st</sup> June (date when significant restrictions were lifted) with full service availability (with some fluidity against normal timescales). Some 250 repairs were stopped 'mid flow' in March and tenants were contacted 50 per day to reappoint their repairs.

Service is now back to full normality with demand creeping back up now that all major restrictions and shielding has lifted. The legacy of covid vindicated the benefits of a gas servicing regime that aims to gain access 1 month in advance of the service date, whilst the commitment of staff to be flexible and keep on working has been second to none. Stores did a tremendous job in rationing out and gain supply of PPE and sanitiser. Stock holdings will be reviewed as availability increases.

### Capital Works (residential), Disabled Facilities Grants and Non Domestic Assets

All major works to homes and buildings had to cease as Government guidance changed, firstly through ceasing internal works such as kitchens or adaptations, then external works such as windows, roofs and general building works. Tenants and occupiers were kept informed throughout in terms of cessation and recommencement, with the particular challenge being contractual obligations in terms of payments, deadlines and contractor cashflow.

Programme mobilisation commenced from the first week of June on external works followed by internals from mid-August. No apparent legacy issues other than to build in new pandemic clauses in to new contracts. The capital programme in itself is simply 'lifted and shifted' with some allowance for seasonal variation. Similarly, for Disabled Adaptations in terms of resumption and then picking up new works as Occupational Therapists returned to work and residents felt able to let builders in to their properties.

On the non-domestic assets side our main offices will operate on a covid secure basis and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. This involves one way systems and strict cleaning and sanitizing regimes.

Community Centres have their own individual guidance from Government which requires full sanitization before and after each use as well as track and trace data being required for all users. These requirements, alongside having to ensure each user group respects social distancing measures means that the 'policing' requirements placed fully on the shoulders of the Council means that it is not currently realistic for the Council to open the centres at present. The situation remains under constant review in terms of Government requirements.

The ultimate legacy being will the Council require as many offices and facilities moving forward given the move to home working for staff and alternative methods of meeting for community groups.

### Tenancy and Income Management

This work area was principally affected by inability to enter homes, along with initial confusion over 'rent holidays', the closure of legal courts and general uncertainty of household income. Typical tenancy issues such as successions and property condition fell by the wayside, but replaced by general nuisance (noise, social distancing, fires).

Income recovery however has become problematic and will have a significant legacy for months if not years to come with the potential to significantly undermine the viability of the entire Housing Revenue Account should payments of rent not return to their near normal levels within the medium term.

It is already established that any tenant going on to Universal Credit will have significantly more arrears than if they remained in work or other legacy benefits, this accounts for some of the escalating arrears whilst the suspension of courts has two fold impact of the department losing its final sanction in the recovery process (which losses the urgency to pay) whilst equally a number of possession hearings (for significant arrears) were already underway when the court freeze occurred; thus meaning some debts are now unprecedented.

The team have continued to liaise with tenants throughout, assisting with money advice and making new arrangements to pay. Compared to the end of quarter 1 last year there is 27% more money owed, representing £104k additional debt, which extrapolates to £416k additional debt over the year should the trend continue. Ultimately money owed is not money lost as it can still be collected however it is not a sustainable position with ramification for how the housing service is operated and/or charged against by other services in the future.

The legacy and recover is such that whilst tenancy management is returning to near normal (albeit that home visits are still tentative). Income recovery process will need to be reviewed, the reopening of courts will have a significant impact on homelessness due to unsustainable arrears, whilst the HRA business plan will need to be refined to accommodate an unforeseen level of debt.

A further legacy is that the section will look to engage and involve tenants in a different way which will provide more real time feedback on the service, neighbourhoods and estates in lieu of less officer activity in and around homes and less face to face interaction (at this stage).

### Community Safety

As with the tenancy team some forms of ASB and crime potentially reduce as people retreated to their homes and visits to home by either officers to enforce and/or other individuals who may cause nuisance were curtailed. However, this did give rise to the perception of household based ASB, sensitivity to breach of the rules which others were following diligently and ultimately public breaches in and around parks, open space, certain outlets and more latterly pubs.

The current legacy is that certain restrictive rules still apply and need to be governed whilst the acts of some committed whilst under lockdown are still yet to be uncovered e.g. safeguarding, cannabis farms etc. Moving forward the team is undergoing a service review which will incorporate the 'new normal'

### Lettings

The Lettings service accrued around 30 void properties over the full lockdown period. 10 additional units were allocated to housing the homeless (bringing temporary accommodation units to 40), whilst when lockdown was eased the opportunity was also used 'downsize' a number of tenants where by tenants who previously needed family homes have now been moved (in accordance with their wishes) to smaller properties and bungalows which have become vacant.

A further consequence of the lockdown was that the time properties were empty and not earning rent (what is called 'void rent loss') with time to let slightly more than doubling from 18 days on average to 40 days; again having a detrimental effect on the HRA business plan. With the backlog of void properties now cleared the objective of the team moving forward is to attempt to claw back some of the void rent loss accrued by absolutely minimising the amount of days a property stands empty.

### Housing Options (Homelessness)

This section faced the massive challenge of both fulfilling the Government's 'everyone in' policy by housing all street and imminent homeless people, whilst also identifying support for survivors of domestic abuse and those with substance dependency and mental health issues. In total 38 homeless people were accommodated, success stories include 12 individuals have secured long term accommodation with support. 5 rough sleepers are still being accommodated who we are currently attempting to find suitable placements (with support) for.

Whilst the serviced area appears to have more or less dealt with the homeless issue in Ashfield, as well as meeting the needs of other groups in need of property relocation. The legacy is undoubtable providing accommodation for all homeless people and in particular finding and fund more accommodation which comes with support (support being something the Council cannot provide itself given its specialist nature). There is also a major challenge to be faced once Courts open up again with a potential of a tsunami of new homeless individuals and families coming on to the

market through evictions for arrears, ASB and Landlords wishing to exist the market due to their own financial circumstance.

The team is currently putting together a bid for CLG funding based on new cash being offered by the Government for what is called 'move on' accommodation for people with support needs, however funding is insufficient and with no guarantees.

The service has also enhanced Ashfield's reputation County wide and at a national level with MHCLG in this area, contributing and advising on many new and unprecedented challenges.

### Private Sector Enforcement

Work in this area has continued throughout in terms of private sector landlord enforcement, dealing with illegal encampments and fulfil wider environmental health duties in terms of infection control and enforcement. Again, placed alongside a general difficulty of accessing properties during the main lockdown phase.

The recovery period will involve much anticipated work as private landlords will seek to evict (sometimes illegally or inappropriately) once the eviction ban is lifted in September whilst the team also have to prepare for a leading role in any local lockdown scenario either within the district or via the mutual aid route (with help and assistance already provided to Newark and Sherwood).

### Health and Wellbeing/Community Engagement

The pandemic saw many people turn to the Council for help in an unprecedented way, this included guidance, protection, mental health support, hospital discharge, food and medicine supplies as well as simple everyday tasks such as tacking their dogs for a walk if they were shielding at home.

The Council were quick to bring together a team to meet the various challenge and focus it around key work streams. One team doing logistics, one team dealing with the residents and one team working with the voluntary sector (without whom much of the support requests such as food could not be delivered), whilst senior managers linked and co-ordinated the teams efforts with that of other key cell groups both in Ashfield and across the County.

The greatest legacy here is our enhanced understanding of our voluntary sector, how it interlinks, how robust it is and what support they require from us to ensure their longevity. Working in partnership there is a real opportunity to benefit the communities and residents of Ashfield in the long term. Whilst for those residents in need of support the events and efforts have perhaps established new bonds and support mechanisms, with an opportunity for any gaps to be investigated, filled and supported.

### Actions and Impact Assessments

As the various teams under this theme have been moving to recovery a list of actions and impacts are being formed. Some focus on the short term of resolving legacy issues others focus on a longer-term issues both capitalising on and rebuilding to a new normal.

The list is not exhaustive as it is an iterative piece of work which is changing on a daily basis. Members of the committee are invited to both comment on, add and/or enhance such actions. Actions are currently placed on a Red Amber Green (RAG) rating – the ratings do not represent a pass or fail but more a representation of whether we know the full extent of what the situation or need is and whether we currently have plans or resources in place to deal with it.

IMPACT AREA	RAG	KEY IMPACTS	IDENTIFIED NEEDS
<b>Repairs/Assets</b>			
<p>Housing; Tenants and residents - ability for directly employed Operatives and contractors to deliver key services (Emergency and routine repairs, Voids works, Aids and Adaptations/Inspections etc.); delays/backlogs.</p>	R	<p>Risk of employees (Officers and Operatives) being unable to deliver a service, damage to property and the well-being of service users.</p> <p>Risk of contractors being unable to adhere to/deliver contract requirements; delays to delivery of works; risk of officers being unable to visit tenants' homes.</p> <p>Shortage/availability of essential materials and supplies.</p>	<p>Ensure adequate supply of PPE to enable Officers and Operatives are equipped and safe to undertake essential repairs and visits.</p> <p>Re-programme/defer works and resume when possible; prioritise any essential works; consider impact of additional costs on planned works and adapt programmes accordingly; continually develop and adapt RAs associated with such delivery to ensure safe working practices (aligned to latest guidance) whilst maximising the completion of works; liaise with tenants to maximise access to homes and to ensure tenants are comfortable with processes and procedures adopted by the Council and its appointed Contractors; consider tenant feedback regarding operating under COVID19 RAs; keep tenants informed regarding timing of works/delays etc.; consider possible exceptions to CPRs to ensure key services are delivered; share services across councils if shortage i.e. protocol/agreement for sharing/assisting as variation to existing agreements/contracts if required; use multiple</p>

			framework agreements for material supplies, monitor key suppliers for ability to deliver if situation worsens and assist where possible e.g. PPN02/20; relax contract clauses to assist where reasonable and practicable; consideration of any revised insurance provision by the Council.
Community Centres; Community Groups	A	Health and Well Being/community cohesion; common rooms to Courts remain open to minimise impact upon residents. Estate Officer availability to maintain essential services such as alarm checks and general upkeep of the Schemes and Courts	Ensure flexibility throughout the teams with the adequate knowledge and training to undertake the essential checks and works. Review viability of venues and facilities; Re-open venues when considered safe and appropriate to do so; keep users informed.
Housing and non-domestic assets; Costs associated with delays to contracts (current and future);	A	Conflict/disputes; standard Ts and Cs to include specific mention of pandemic and clarity of operation of such clauses.	CPRs to be specific regarding Council's approach to pandemic situations (rights and obligations of the parties).
Procurement; generally	A	Inability to receive sufficient and suitable tenders	Possible exceptions to CPRs to ensure key services are delivered; share services across councils if shortage i.e. protocol/agreement for sharing/assisting as variation to existing agreements/contracts if required; monitor key suppliers for ability to deliver if situation worsens.
<b>Tenancy/Income</b>			
Income Collection and Recovery - loss of rental income	R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of income to the HRA – main source of income to Housing and Asset Directorate. 30 year business plan will require a review as less</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current structure of the Income team needs to move to recovery stage, therefore resources</li> </ul>

		<p>income may impact on level of service delivery to tenants in the future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government ban on possession proceedings and eviction means we are unable to take enforcement action</li> <li>• Delays in court hearings/evictions when courts reopen – could be 3 month wait?</li> <li>• Potential increase in evictions resulting in increase in homelessness</li> <li>• Performance KPI's will not be upper quartile and may take years to recover to pre-covid levels</li> <li>• Bad debt provision will increase</li> <li>• Court costs likely to increase due to increase in court cases sent to Court</li> <li>• Potential increase in void properties due to turnover of stock e.g. evictions</li> <li>• Potential increase in poorly maintained properties</li> <li>• Increase in fuel poverty/financial hardship</li> <li>• Former tenant arrears may become harder to collect (non-priority debt)</li> <li>• Increased numbers of tenants claiming Universal Credit due to change of circumstances e.g. job loss</li> <li>• Potential increase in DHP applications</li> <li>• Increase in charity applications and food bank referrals</li> <li>• Local outbreaks may impact upon service</li> </ul>	<p>directed where necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional income recovery staff may be required</li> <li>• KPI will need reviewing</li> <li>• Re-introduce face to face contact with tenants</li> <li>• Continued money management advice/support</li> <li>• Promote rent first culture</li> <li>• Promote online tenants portal to encourage tenants to pay rent on line</li> <li>• Promote direct debit payments and other ways to pay</li> <li>• Take enforcement swiftly to reduce bad debt provision/minimise the level of debt for tenants</li> <li>• Bad debt provision will need reviewing</li> <li>• Ensure sufficient court cost budget</li> <li>• Promote DHP scheme</li> <li>• Early intervention work with universal credit claimants</li> <li>• More early intervention arrears work.</li> <li>• Business Continuity plan for local outbreaks</li> <li>• Promote PAM assist/health and well-being/maintain regular one to</li> </ul>
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		<p>delivery/income collection in the future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in staff turnover/sickness/welfare issues due to increase in work/pressures</li> </ul>	<p>ones/provide support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from the Community Development Team to foodbanks re: potential funding streams/grants</li> </ul>
Humanitarian Support – ongoing support requirements	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in requests for support and support activity</li> <li>• ongoing charity applications and food bank referrals</li> <li>• Potential increase in safeguarding cases</li> <li>• Local outbreaks will require a reinstatement of the HOST team to assist tenants</li> <li>• Mental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signpost to the voluntary sector (AVA) and foodbanks in the area</li> <li>• Signpost to NCC</li> <li>• Promote the NHS good Samaritan app</li> <li>• Empower tenants to find own solutions rather than create dependency</li> <li>• Provide Tenancy Support and Money Management Advice</li> <li>• Liaise with Social Services and external agencies</li> <li>• Promote the MASH Safeguarding Hub with staff</li> <li>• Local outbreak plan prepared to include resurrection of the HOST Team</li> </ul>
<b>Community Protection</b>			
Increased levels of service demand in Community Safety (commencing at Triage).	A/R	<p>Backlog/timeliness of responding. Ability to case manage effectively. Customer dissatisfaction/perception.</p>	<p>Recruitment to vacancies on the establishment (in place). Consideration for gap in resources (managing demands at the front end). Customer self help improvement</p>

			(website/digital improvements in tracking case updates, supplying information inc. timescales)
Increase level of Complex Cases (unknown to service). Substance misuse, mental health.	A	Complex cases increasing placing greater level of demands on internal services and partners. Reduced partner support (returning to agencies due to staffing).	Leadership support for Complex case management in partner agencies. Reaffirmation of partner buy in.
Increase safeguarding issues including domestic abuse, Child abuse in the home, modern slavery, criminal exploitation.	R	Risk and harm to individuals in the community. Potential increases in children and adults safeguarding unknown (i.e. lack of school/agency contact). Demands on service – housing accommodation, health, crime.	Data/knowledge sharing. Strategic Partnership leadership.
<b>Lettings/Homeless DFG/Private Sector</b>			
Housing Options – Requirement accommodate rough sleepers and help them into long term suitable accommodation	A	Financial impact in the form of ongoing B&B costs, help with rent deposits. Resources impact of providing ongoing support. Reduced availability of temp accommodation for other households and increased reliance on unsuitable B&B	Financial resources to cover additional costs incurred. Support needs to enable former rough sleepers to maintain their new home. Access to additional units of supported accommodation
Housing Options – down turn in the economy resulting in residents across all tenures being unable to afford their accommodation and being at risk of homelessness.	R	Increased number of homeless applications and acceptances Increased proportion of social housing lets being made to homeless applicants. Financial impact in the form of ongoing B&B costs, help with rent deposits. Resources implications, do we have enough staff to cope with demand? Implications for the number of TA units we have.	Potential requirement for additional units of TA. Potential requirement for additional staffing resources to cope with demand. Improved access to PRS properties to meet housing needs. Financial resources.
Housing Options – cessation of stop on evictions from social housing and PRS ending resulting in flood of homeless applicants.	R	Financial impact in the form of ongoing B&B costs, help with rent deposits, payments to clear low level arrears to prevent homelessness.	Potential requirement for additional units of TA. Potential requirement for additional staffing resources to cope with demand.

		Resources implications, do we have enough staff to cope with demand? Implications for the number of TA units we have.	Financial. Need to cover additional expenses to prevent and relieve homelessness.
Housing Options – Increase in victims DV applying as homeless following long term covid lockdown.	A	Financial impact in the form of ongoing B&B costs, help with rent deposits. Resources implications of providing ongoing support. Increase in number of homeless applications and acceptances, potentially resulting increased proportion of social housing lets being made to this group and fewer properties for other applicants.	Requirement for specialist and suitable accomm. Requirement for specialist support for those accommodated. Move on options
Lettings – increase in housing register applications following economic downturn and increase in homelessness	G	Increased number of residents applying for social housing Implication for staffing resources to admin, assess and process applications. 'waiting lists' getting longer and fewer rehousing opportunities for lower priority applicants	None, sufficient resources to cope.
Private Sector Enforcement – threat of increased number of illegal evictions due to court closures and landlords seeking to take their own action to resolve disputes	A	Increased number of homeless applicants. Pressure on staffing resources to deal with and prevent illegal evictions. Potential increase in landlord prosecutions.	Potential staffing resource need. Assistance required from other teams, housing options, legal.
Disabled Facilities – Long term slowdown in the number of referrals received and cases completed as local residents in need are reluctant to allow access to their home to OT, ADC officers and contractors. Issue could bring in to question the ability of some residents to remain independent in their home and will have implications for other council services (lettings, housing options)	A	BCF budget for the year being underspent. A backlog of future referrals building up that the DFG team may struggle to catch up on. Fewer residents benefiting from the adaptations they need to retain their independence could lead to an increase in residents seeking urgent rehousing.	Potential need to make available additional staffing resources to cope with increased demand once back log cases starts to come through. Ensure effective and efficient procurement procedures in place
<b>Health/Community</b>			

CVS unable to support residents through recovery due to lack of resource (funding or capacity)	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty for residents to access food parcels, mental health support and befriending services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued financial support/supplies to food banks through raising awareness of potential funds/grants</li> <li>• Continued support to CVS through Ashfield Community Development Group, Ashfield Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Ashfield Community Grants.</li> <li>• Stronger links developed between VCS and Notts Community Hub</li> </ul>
Low take up of Flu vaccination	A/R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents unsure if they have flu or CV-19</li> <li>• Increased pressures on NHS services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Flu Campaign 2020 to residents</li> <li>• Develop Community Flu Clinics in deprived area to increase uptake</li> </ul>
ADC Leisure Centres unable to reopen due to financial position	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in number of people active within the district</li> <li>• Closure of Leisure Centres and redundancies</li> <li>• Hand back of Leisure Contract to ADC</li> <li>• Unable to procure new operator contract and achieve £0 subsidy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADC and SLM to work together to agree solutions.</li> <li>• DCMS to provide funding to support the loss of income during 2019/20 and 2020/21 (not yet offered)</li> </ul>

## Covid 19 Response and Recovery: Directorate of Resources and Business Transformation

Service	Response Actions	Recovery Actions
Shared HR Service	Collate daily sit rep reports produced since March Lockdown-which monitor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees at work</li> <li>• Employees working from home</li> <li>• Employees affected by Covid (shielding/self-isolation/caring roles)</li> <li>• Employees sickness absence levels</li> <li>• Employees annual leave being taken</li> </ul>	Continue to collate daily sit rep reports to assist D-R&BT with monitoring the Covid 'health' of the organisation.
	Expedient coordinated and arranged Covid Testing for employees	Expedient coordinated and arranged Covid Testing for employees
	Provision of HR-FAQ's to provide clarification to employees on self-isolation,	Coordinate the Government's 'Plan for Work'-Kickstart programme involving 6 month work placements for young persons on Universal Credit
	Continued information and signposting on physical and mental health wellbeing support for employees and members	Support to CLT with review of temporary changes to HR policies due to Covid impacts
	Coordinate the list of employees classed as vulnerable or shielding	Review of specific HR Policies due to support embedding of different delivery models and increase in employees working predominantly from home/remotely
	Support to CLT with temporary changes to HR policies due to Covid impacts e.g. annual leave, flexi-time, quarantine, attendance management	Active ongoing monitoring and flagging up of employee absence especially if linked to Covid impacts e.g. physical and mental health
	Support with effective redeployment of employees to support Essential Services and/or Humanitarian work programmes.	Continued information and signposting on physical and mental health wellbeing support for employees and members
	Ongoing timely support with advising and providing clarification to unions on raised concerns by employees due to Covid impacts.	
	Ongoing support to managers and participation in employee relations matters e.g. disciplinary investigations/hearings	

Corporate Resources and Transformation	Fast-tracked DST infrastructure and digital processes to support Essential Services e.g. remote working, on-line transactions and payments	Launch new website in September 2020-enhanced functionality and accessibility for residents to support on-line transactions and engagement
	Fast-tracked improvements to the website to simplify on-line transactions and payments	Refreshed blueprint and roadmaps aligned to supporting future embedded different ways of working especially remote access, digital transactions and channel shift to more effective, efficient means
	Fast-tracked increased number of services able to take on-line payments	Expedite delivery of DST programme particularly supporting Essential Services
	Fast-tracked roll-out of digital forms to support e-payments, benefits applications, grant payments	Support CLT, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny with monitoring reports for Covid-Corporate Risks and Corporate Plan key actions in regard to risk level and delivery of mitigating/control measures and actions
	Development of a new website with enhanced digital, on-line functionality and accessibility for residents	
	Fast-tracked rollout of Office365/Teams to employees and members to support remote working, holding virtual team meetings and engagement with employees.	
	Fast-tracked expansion of telephony Netcall system to additional services to assist with phone management by remote workers.	
	Managed the refresh of Corporate Risk Register to integrate Covid specific risks and mitigating measures	
	Managed the refresh of Corporate Plan integrating Covid Recovery themes and key actions	
ICT	Rapid roll-out of IT hardware to enable immediate and sustained spike in staff working from home e.g. provision of laptops, phones, softphones	Increased broadband bandwidth capacity by 100% to accommodate increase demands on speed, usage and cloud based applications.
	Enables personal devices to be used securely for work purposes-to enable increased working from home	Implementation of cloud based telephony application provision that directly supports embedding of remote working by employees and members

	Rapid response to providing remote and on-site support to set up devices/remote access to IT networks/systems.	Ongoing implementation of additional IT hardware to enable embedding of remote working
	Enabled remote processing of secure e-payments within PCI compliance.	
	Strengthened IT security to mitigate spikes in cyber-attacks.	
	Enabled and facilitated virtual Council meetings via Zoom and streamed via YouTube channel.	
	Facilitated transition from Blackberry App to Office365 Outlook App for all employees and members-enhanced functionality for remote working.	
Corporate Communications	Coordinated promotion of national Covid key messages and decisions made by central government	Ongoing coordinated promotion of national Covid key messages and decisions made by central government
	Active sustained promotion of Covid impacts on Council services and the Council's response to managing Covid including re-opening of facilities and services by the Council and partners e.g. HWRCs	Active sustained promotion of the Council's response to managing Covid including re-opening of facilities and changes to how services may be provided in the future by the Council
	Active sustained promotion of the Council's continual commitment and ability to maintain all Essential Services and its wider support to communities and humanitarian efforts.	Active promotion and clarification of requirements and restrictions of any future localised Covid Lockdowns within Ashfield/Nottinghamshire
	Effective management of spike in social media hits and comments and raised questions regarding Covid impacts	Active promotion of Council, national or partner organisation campaigns targeting help and support to residents due to Covid impacts
	Active promotion of Council campaigns targeting help and support to residents due to Covid impacts e.g. additional waste collection	
Commercial Development	Immediate contact to tenants of the Council's direct managed commercial units within district offering support options e.g. rent deferral plans	Active ongoing monitoring of rent payments, financial and resilience status with all tenants across MDC direct

		managed commercial portfolio and Commercial Investment portfolio.
	Active monitoring of tenants rent payments	
	Active monitoring of all tenants rent payments of the Council's commercial investment portfolio	
	Immediate and active intervention to address Shearings Hotel administration status (May 2020) and subsequent timely reassignment of lease and terms to a new tenant-the hotel re-opened on 1 August.	
Customer Services	All customer services officers enabled to work from home and process customer contacts via telephone or email.	Continue to embed provision of customer contacts through remote working and channel shift
	All Council offices closed in March. All face to face contacts at Council offices ceased in March	Monitor take up of re-opening of Council offices (since August), by appointment only, to assess customer needs and best way of providing required service.
	All customer contacts including spikes (e.g. release of details on business grants) have been accommodated remotely.	
	Monitoring of contacts linked to providing requested details on website where practicable	
	Opportunity taken to support customer contacts with accessing required information or submitting service requests on-line.	
Revenues and Benefits	All revenues and benefits officers enabled to work from home and process council tax, benefits, grants, business rates via on-line, telephone or email.	Completion and cessation of Business Grants scheme.
	Fast tracked provision of digital forms to assist residents, businesses and claimants with ease of accessibility.	Focus on recovery of arrears (Council Tax/Business Rates)
	Approval granted to accept copies of required evidence e.g. documents, digitally rather than hard copy	Ongoing development and implementation of digital forms to enable on-line transactions for residents, customers and claimants

	Government Business Grants (Retail, Hospitality and Leisure) scheme effectively managed and administered. Over 98% of eligible businesses paid a grant to date involving circa £18m paid out to 1600 businesses within the district	
Organisational Recovery- Corporate & undertaken by D-R&BT directorate	Daily monitoring of collated sit rep reports provided by all services	Ongoing daily monitoring of collated sit rep reports to assess any 'red flags' e.g. spike in absence/self-isolation within service areas. Active assessment through projected second wave over autumn/winter
	Monitoring reports on status with services and staff provided to CLT, Risk manager, corporate communications and portfolio holders	'Red flag' monitoring reports regards services and staff will be provided to key stakeholders as required.
	Daily status reports on all Essential Services- assessing any critical impacts on capacity, resources, PPE	Ongoing daily monitoring of any critical impacts on Essential Services
	Monitoring of any raised issues/concerns from unions/employees/residents about provision of Covid-safe work environments	Ongoing monitoring of any raised issues/concerns from unions/employees/residents about provision of Covid-safe work environments
	Active dialogue, updates and liaison with Unions on Covid impacts and measures being taken	Ongoing active dialogue, updates and liaison with Unions on Covid impacts and measures being taken
	Provision of an employee volunteer pool for voluntary redeployment to support capacity and delivery of Essential Services	Retain provision of an employee volunteer pool for voluntary redeployment to support capacity and delivery of Essential Services-in preparation for a projected second phase over autumn/winter
	Active participation in LRF-LA Cell sharing information across Nott's authorities on service impacts and measures being taken-number of sub groups actively assisted with Covid impacts e.g. PPE needs/provision, pressures on housing options, social distancing in waste services.	Outcomes of (Council) Service Covid-Impact Statements integrated into existing work programmes e.g. DST/ Agile Working/Service Reviews
		Outcomes of Covid Employee Survey (May 2020) integrated into existing work programmes e.g. HR Policy review, Agile Working, Service Reviews, DST
		Outcomes of Organisational Culture Survey (Feb 2020-pre Covid) and May 2020(during Covid) integrated into existing work programmes

## Economic Recovery Implications

### Over-arching Issues to Address

This report brings together the latest real time data to help understand the significant impacts that the Covid-19 pandemic and associated economic disruption is having upon Ashfield's economy. It provides a 'point-in-time' analysis that should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to reflect the unfolding economic situation, emerging impacts locally, and the effects of national recovery policy and interventions.

The analysis emphasizes the severity of disruption to day-to-day operations being experienced by the District's business base, as well as the negative impact that the pandemic is having on sales/revenues and future orders. Over 30% (17,700) of Ashfield's working residents have been furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and while local unemployment has risen sharply, it is likely to increase further later this year as this financial subsidy is withdrawn by government. Visits to retail, recreation and workplace venues are still significantly lower than 'normal', posing economic challenges for Kirkby and Sutton Town Centres, whilst depression and mental wellbeing represent a further risk to the District's future recovery.

We know that so far, the impact on individual sectors has varied significantly reflecting the extent to which lockdown measures have forced some industries to temporarily 'shut down'. Just over 20% of Ashfield's local employment, output and business base fall within sectors at highest risk from short term economic harm from Covid-19 which is relatively low and reflects the low reliance on sectors such as hospitality and recreation. However, these are still important sectors for the District, whilst Ashfield faces continued structural vulnerability due to its continued reliance on Manufacturing, which continues to struggle. The substantial numbers of public sector workers will help insulate Ashfield to an extent in the short-to-medium term, as will significant developments in the pipeline such as Summit Park logistics, which demonstrate that if high quality development opportunities are provided, Ashfield's future remains bright.

In this regard, a number of scenarios continue to emerge to consider the potential short and longer term impacts of Covid-19 upon the economy and these should be treated with caution given the greater than usual uncertainty. Experian's latest projections imply a short term economic impact equivalent to £433 million and 2,500 jobs across the Borough during 2020, taking at least 2-3 years for the local economy to recover to pre Covid-19 levels of economic activity.

The analysis of emerging economic impacts presented in this Plan therefore raises a number of implications for the Route Map to address:

- The 'real time' nature of the evolving economic situation emphasises the need to keep on top of data and intelligence as it emerges, to monitor impacts as they unfold, and use this to review the strategy response on a timely basis. The short term effects of Covid-19 will already have altered Ashfield's local business base, creating a new 'baseline', and we are unlikely to see the full scale of impact until later in the year when key subsidy schemes such as the JRS are withdrawn.
- Economic recovery should represent the over-riding short term focus for ADC, identifying initial priorities, actions and interventions to guide business resilience and economic restoration over the first few years of the strategy period. The Route Map must distinguish between existing interventions that can be accelerated to support the recovery response versus bespoke interventions to tackle Covid-19 specific circumstances and challenges. This should also consider the scope to fast track existing projects to 'shovel ready' status to take advantage of current government funding opportunities, such as the Maid Marian Line.

- Whilst economic scenarios will continue to emerge to consider the potential short and longer term impacts of Covid-19, the significant uncertainty underlines the need for the route map to be flexible in order to respond rapidly to locally relevant risk factors and outcomes, for instance local lockdowns, worsening mental health data, or the underperformance of key industrial clusters.
- ADC must not lose sight of longer term economic growth aspirations as short term recovery responses are prepared and implemented. Whilst some existing strategic commitments will inevitably need to be re-prioritised in light of Covid-19 to reflect short term challenges, others will still remain relevant albeit may need to be adjusted to reflect a 'new normal'.
- The clear sector dimension to Covid-19 impacts so far underlines the need for a strong sectoral approach within the Route Map, to ensure that adequate resources are focused towards those parts of the District's business base facing the most acute challenges, but also to enable Ashfield to capitalise on growth and innovation opportunities around digital transformation or leverage existing assets to contribute to the Government's 'Build, Build, Build' and green recovery agendas.

### Emerging Themes to Guide Local Economic Recovery

- 1. Town Centre Recovery:** Boost local consumer demand and confidence by promoting Ashfield District as a great place to live and visit. Attract spending back to Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton Town Centres through promotional activity, local purchasing campaigns and community projects. This could involve the Council working with local partners to implement an 'open for business' campaign to publicise businesses, offers and events as town centre businesses gradually re-open.
- 2. Regeneration Capacity Building:** This would need to include a Full Time Regeneration Team for ADC tasked with producing a new Economic Development Strategy. New Dedicated Capacity Building and leveraging of the Council's own dedicated resources to instigate a full time Regeneration Team for Ashfield District capable of delivering and taking forward its own Economic Development Strategy for the District. This could involve progressing a wider Place Marketing campaign to encourage a broader range of developers and investors to come back to Ashfield. This would involve the new Regeneration Team marketing the District's assets effectively to developers and housebuilders more generally and promote Ashfield as a place for aspiring households to move to.
- 3. Skills and Training:** By working with local education and training providers, the D2N2 LEP and others to ensure that local residents –in particular young people - can access skills and employability support including specific opportunities for re-training, business start-up, and developing digital/e-commerce competencies.
- 4. Industrial Sectoral Support:** As Ashfield's business base transitions from restart, to recover, to renew, this should include a locally-responsive business resilience programme with targeted support to enable firms to adapt to new technologies (such as enhancing digital and e-commerce capabilities), diversify or access new markets (including exporting opportunities) and support business start-ups amongst residents re-entering the labour market as a result of Covid-19.
- 5. Green Business Growth:** This would involve harnessing innovation 'Green Recovery' opportunities generated by the pandemic (such as medical technology and clean growth), using these to accelerate existing business clusters, development proposals and local

business ecosystems, particularly where these align with Government economic recovery funding initiatives.

- 6. Development and Infrastructure Projects:** This would aim to kick start investment and stimulate economic activity within the District, engaging with key partners such as the LEP to leverage funding opportunities from emerging funding packages such as the Getting Building Fund. This would include progressing opportunities such as the Maid Marian Line Rail Extension to the proposed HS2 Hub at Toton; the new Garden settlement(s); and the opportunities emerging from the Towns Fund and Future High Streets fund proposals.
- 7. Supporting Ashfield's Residents and Workforce:** The Pandemic may create a significant mental health crisis for Ashfield's residents due to heightened levels of anxiety due to the risk of catching the infection, disrupted education, lost jobs/income, dying or losing family members. From an economic perspective, this theme would include ADC working with the NHS Nottingham City CCG to ensure widespread availability of mental health and psychosocial support and to assist residents to overcome financial difficulties and to come out of debt and re-enter the workforce.

## Directorate of Legal and Governance

### Risk and Emergency Planning

The Risk & Emergency Planning Unit is responsible for leading on corporate health and safety & fire safety risk management, emergency planning and business continuity.

This has been a particularly busy period for Risk and Emergency Planning. Areas of work currently ongoing include putting into place a variety of control measures to safeguard staff including actively encouraging and facilitating working from home (where possible), social distancing measures, increased building cleansing/sanitising routines, procurement and distribution of sanitising hand gel, enhanced vehicle cleansing/sanitising and other procedures such as the ADC Home Visiting Safe System of Work. All of this has been captured within the Council's Corporate COVID-19 risk assessment.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the government published new 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines to assist with managing the risks associated with the gradual easing of pandemic lockdown measures, the increase in the number of employees returning to work and the safety and health implications brought about by this. Within *the* risk assessment, COVID-19 risk control measures have been grouped into specific working environments and work scenarios which are consistent with the current guidelines.

The Team have also been working on business continuity and the provision of advice and guidance on PPE across the Council.

### Legal

The court lists are currently very restrictive and only dealing with urgent matters such as injunctions. Possessions proceedings and evictions remain stayed until the end of September 2020.

Other cases such as prosecutions aren't currently being heard but the courts are continuing to work through the backlog of hearings. This will inevitably create a backlog of work for the Litigation Team when the courts start listing cases again.

Property matters continue to be progressed in the usual way with signing and sealing continuing as normal. There is an increased amount of contractual matters arising throughout the pandemic that are still being progressed and Planning matters and enforcement work continue to be progressed.

### Scrutiny and Democratic Services

The legal requirements for good governance and decision-making have not changed as a result of COVID-19. Normal delegations to Committees, Portfolio Holders and Officers remain in place as detailed in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. The Scrutiny and Democratic Services Team have continued to support governance, decision making and meetings through the pandemic through the provision of both Officer and Member Advice, management and publication of decisions, Constitutional advice and the management and administration of all virtual meetings of the Council and its Committees.

The Scrutiny function continues to provide robust consideration of issues and agreed its annual workplan (2020/21) in July. The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel was established in June 2020 to review of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and take an active role in respect of the Council's recovery plans. The Panel held its first meeting in July 2020

### Elections

Whilst Elections are postponed in 2020, the Elections Team continue to provide advice and assistance to constituents of the district. They are also in the process of carrying out the 2020 canvass as required by law. The 2020 canvass was not suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Team also continue to support the interim review of a limited number of polling places that have become unavailable for use. The Council will consider the review proposals and consultation comments at its October meeting.

### **Next Steps**

At the last meeting of the Panel, Members agreed a draft workplan. In accordance with this Members should consider attendance at the next meeting, to be held on 6 October. This meeting is scheduled to consider small businesses and high street recovery therefore representatives from the business community would be beneficial to this meeting.

Members have also indicated consideration of the development of a key worker. To scope this effectively initial meetings with the relevant service managers are being arranged to consider implications such as costs, funding locations and consultation.

The Panel should also consider any potential comments, concerns or recommendations for its update to Cabinet on the 15 September.

### Implications

#### **Corporate Plan:**

As part of the recovery phase, the Corporate Plan has been reviewed to take account of the impacts of COVID-19 and with a forward look to potential recovery plans. The refreshed Corporate Plan was approved at the July 21 meeting of Cabinet.

The refreshed Corporate Plan sets out the three main National recovery themes of Health Recovery, Economic Recovery, and Social and Community Recovery. The Council's two main strands of recovery are:

### Ashfield as a Place – Community and Economic Recovery

Supporting the community and businesses in achieving stability and a new normality following COVID-19., assisting in rebuilding, restoring, and rehabilitating the community's emotional, social, economic, and physical wellbeing.

### The Council – Organisational Recovery

Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on Council services, finances, and employees, and planning for future financial resilience and how the Council may need to operate differently.

Local recovery themes have been identified through the refreshed Corporate Plan:

### External Housing and Communities

- Health and Happiness:
  - Building on humanitarian work with the Community and Voluntary Sector.
  - Re-introduction of events when safe to do so.
  - Ensuring workplace health.
- Homes and Housing:
  - Reviewing the Homelessness Strategy to understand the impact of COVID-19.
- Cleaner and Greener:
  - Delivering the 'Bag It' campaign.
  - Safe re-opening of park buildings.
- Safer and Stronger:
  - Providing refuge accommodation for victims in abusive relationships.
  - Raising awareness of domestic abuse and ensuring support is provided to victims.

### External Economy and Place Finance

- Economic Growth and Place:
  - Opening the District's Town Centres safely and in accordance with COVID-19 Secure guidelines.
  - Ensuring eligible businesses receive COVID-19 grant support funding.
  - Ensuring transport is safe.

### Internal Council Services

- Innovate and Improve:
  - Fast tracking the digital transformation delivery to improve accessibility and online capability, centred on the customer.
  - Supporting employees to increase digital skills.
  - Working in partnership to increase digital inclusion across the District.
  - Enabling employees, where appropriate and relevant, to work from home, having adequate digital tools and equipment, and a safe working environment.
  - Ensuring employee wellbeing at home or when returning to the workplace.

## Legal:

Ashfield District Council is a statutory Category One Responder under the **Civil Contingencies Act 2004** and works with multi agency partners through the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LRF when dealing with Major Incidents.

Emergency and Urgent Decision powers are set out in the Council's Constitution as outlined above.

Emergency Financial Decisions:

- **Urgent Decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework (Part 4 of the Constitution):**

The Executive, the Leader or Portfolio Holder or Chief Officers may take a decision which is contrary to the Council's policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget approved by Council if the decision is urgent. A decision is urgent if:

- a) It is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the Council; and
- b) The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees that the decision is urgent.

- **Section 138 Local Government Act 1972**

Where an emergency or disaster involving destruction of or danger to life or property occurs, is imminent or there is reasonable ground for expecting such an emergency or disaster and it is likely to affect the whole or part of the District or its residents, the Council may:

- a) Incur such expenditure as they consider necessary in taking action themselves; and
- b) Make grants or loans to other persons or bodies on conditions determined by the Council in respect of any such action taken by those persons or bodies.

**Coronavirus Act 2020** received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020. The Act has extensive schedules setting out a wide range of powers giving a framework to life under lockdown. Regulations have underpinned the details of the framework.

**Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989** requires that Committees of the Council are politically proportionate.

## Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Details of funding confirmed to date are included in the body of the report.
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

**Risk:**

Risk	Mitigation
The Council's Corporate Risk Register has been reviewed to take account of impacts and increased risks as a result of COVID-19.	Monitoring and updating the COVID-19 related risks through the Council's existing Corporate Risk Management processes and through the work of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel.

**Human Resources:**

Advice and guidance has been provided to employees throughout the pandemic based on government guidance, details of which are included in the body of the report.

**Environmental/Sustainability**

The COVID-19 lockdown period has undoubtedly led to an unprecedented reduction in CO2 emissions and a huge improvement in air quality. The challenge for the recovery phase is how to urgently restart the District's economy to protect the income and livelihoods of people whilst striving to capitalise on some of the positive environmental benefits enjoyed during the COVID-19 lockdown period and enable positive behaviour change that endures for the long term.

**Equalities:**

Equality impact assessments will be undertaken as part of the recovery phase when considering policy development/changes or service delivery changes.

**Other Implications:**

None.

**Background papers:**

NCC Public Health Team, *Nottinghamshire County Council COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan*, June 2020.

**Report Author and Contact Officer**

Directorate updates within this report have been provided by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team.

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