

## For General Release

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CABINET: 11 MAY 2020</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Update on Croydon's response to Covid-19</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Jo Negrini, Chief Executive Rachel Flowers, Director of Public Health</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBERS:</b>	<b>Councillor Tony Newman, Leader of the Council and all Cabinet Members</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:</b> Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on a global scale, including the UK and Croydon. Our response has been wide ranging, covering all aspects of the Corporate Plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People live long, healthy, happy and independent lives: through our public health messaging, adult social care and support for vulnerable residents</li><li>• Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential: through our support for schools and families, particularly the most vulnerable</li><li>• Business moves here and invests, our existing businesses grow: by paying government grants and support with business rates</li></ul>	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b> Whilst this report is for information, and therefore does not have any direct financial impact, it is clear that Covid-19 will have a significant impact on both the Council's financial position, as well as the financial position of residents and businesses across the borough. The Local Government Secretary has said in a number of public statements that local authorities will be reimbursed for costs associated with Covid19 and should not cut corners to manage financial costs. To date the government has made a number of different funding streams available to local authorities to provide support for the costs we are incurring directly. To support venerable Council Tax payers and small businesses.	
<b>KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.:</b> N/A	
The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below: <b>1. RECOMMENDATIONS</b> 1.1 That the Council record its thanks for all the front line and support service staff that have continued to provide vital services across the borough; 1.2 That the Council record its thanks for the work of organisations, staff and volunteers across Croydon, including voluntary and community groups, who have enabled a strong coordinated response across Croydon and ensured vulnerable residents receive the support they need;	

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| 1.3 | That the Cabinet note the report and the actions taken in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; and  |
| 1.4 | That the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, Chief Executive and S151 Officer continue efforts to raise awareness of costs incurred by Croydon Council in responding to Covid-19, supporting residents, business and communities, and the need for further funding from central government. |

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 As a city within a global city, Croydon has been dramatically impacted by the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak. Covid-19 is the biggest disruptor to society since the Second World War and the biggest public health crisis for over 100 years, with personal impacts on millions of people across the country.
- 2.2 The impact is far reaching. There has been over 186,000 cases of Covid-19 in the UK, and over 24,000 fatalities. Croydon is not immune to this, with cases and fatalities within the local community. The combined and unprecedented impact on the local economy, both on businesses and the workforce, will exacerbate inequalities, where some parts of our communities are disproportionately impacted for the short, medium and long term.
- 2.3 As this is a communicable disease, without any vaccine or scientific intervention, the immediate impact of Covid-19 will be felt for the next 18-24 months. Although at this time it is still not clear how this may manifest. There are some people who are clinically vulnerable, who are currently shielded, and who may need some form of additional support to keep them shielded for this time and beyond.
- 2.4 It is clear that the public health emergency is becoming a major economic emergency, with a huge impact on businesses and employment. This will have long lasting impacts on communities across Croydon. The Council is already responding to this by increasing our support for businesses and residents facing financial difficulties. We will continue this and work hard to protect local jobs and bring new ones to Croydon.
- 2.5 Public services across Croydon have faced significant pressure, both in terms of new demands, but also on the need to very rapidly be redesigned to support residents whilst maintaining physical (social) distancing, for the protection of both residents and staff. The Council has worked with partners to support residents, particularly the most vulnerable, prioritising key services and redeploying resources to provide support where it is most needed.
- 2.6 The Council has established emergency response structures to coordinate actions with key partners, across Croydon and London. The Croydon Local Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Leader of the Council, has been critical in coordinating the wide ranging response, from public health advice and information, PPE provision, voluntary sector support to provision of emergency food parcels to the most vulnerable. This report provides an update on these activities.

2.7 The Cabinet has held daily informal meetings throughout the pandemic to support the Council's response and wider engagement with communities, partners and businesses.

### **3. EPIDEMIOLOGY OF COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)**

3.1 On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. This was later identified as a novel coronavirus, causing Covid-19.

3.2 Since then, Coronavirus has spread across the world and on 30 January 2020 the outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and on 11 March 2020 WHO upgraded this to a pandemic. According to the European Centre for Disease prevention and Control, as of 24 April 2020, more than 2.66 million cases have been diagnosed globally with over 190,000 fatalities.

3.3 As these figures demonstrate, transmission of the Covid-19 virus is occurring extensively. Transmission is primarily between people through respiratory droplets and contact. As a result, action to prevent transmission has been taken on an unprecedented global scale.

3.4 In the UK 186,599 people have tested positive for Covid-19 (as of 5pm on 3 May). The UK Government is providing daily updates on the number of people hospitalised and of those, the number of people that have unfortunately died as a result of the illness (28,446 people). This data does not include community deaths.

3.5 Every part of the country has been affected by Covid-19, including Croydon. As of 5pm on 3 May, 1,388 cases of Covid-19 had been confirmed in the borough. There had been 259 deaths at Croydon University Hospital.

3.6 Figures, however, change on a daily basis and therefore the above information will not reflect all cases. Office of National Statistics are providing wider data, but there is a time lag in this being available.

3.7 In a similar approach to many countries, the UK adopted different phases to Covid-19:

- Containment: catching cases early and tracing all contacts to avoid the spread of the disease
- Delay: increasing efforts to delay the spread of Covid-19, which included the self-isolation of anyone with symptoms
- Research: intensifying focus on treatment and research
- Mitigate: where the virus has become widespread and placing pressure on services and wider society

3.8 The first cases within the UK were confirmed on 29 January 2020. For the first month all cases within the UK were as a result of international travel. On 28 February the first person to catch Covid-19 within the UK was confirmed. On 23 March, the Prime Minister announced a range of restrictions, putting the

country into 'lockdown' to minimize further transmission of the virus and protect the most vulnerable.

#### 4. CROYDON RESPONSE

- 4.1 The remainder of this report provides a summary of how Croydon Council and partners within the Local Strategic Partnership (which is chaired by the Leader of the Council), have worked together to respond to the impact of Covid-19 in Croydon.
- 4.2 The Council's cabinet has been meeting informally on a daily basis throughout the pandemic. Cabinet Members continue to work closely with their relevant officers to inform the Council's response and plan for future recovery.

#### Croydon Council emergency structures

- 4.3 Croydon Council is a category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As such, we have a dedicated resilience team responsible for developing and testing a variety of emergency response plans and structures. Work has been underway since January and the Council activated the emergency response plan on 16 March and established the following structure.

Group	Responsibilities	Reports in to
Gold	Also called the Strategic Coordination Group, Gold consider the response in its wider context and determines long term impacts and risks, and communicates the overarching strategy and objectives for the response.	London Gold
Coordination	Coordination of all council services to ensure that we can effectively respond to the community and council impacts that COVID-19 is presenting or could present in the future.	Gold
Business Continuity	To ensure the council has a co-ordinated overview of its business continuity arrangements and the ability to assess of the impact on services through staff absence, supply chain issues etc.	Coordination

- 4.4 Frequency of the meetings has varied and subject to requirements.
- 4.5 The BECC (Borough Emergency Control Centre) was established alongside these structures. The BECC is responsible for collecting, collating and disseminating information to support quick and informed decisions. The BECC has coordinated information to and from London structures. Dashboards are

produced on a daily basis within the latest information across a range of indicators.

## **Partnership structures**

- 4.6 The response has required strong partnership working, frequent and honest communications and collaboration to tackle the challenges faced across Croydon. The Local Strategic Partnership has been invaluable in this process. Whereas some areas disbanded the LSP, Croydon has always maintained this partnership which has ensured good relationships and understanding between organisations.
- 4.7 The Croydon LSP included representatives from a range of partners:
- Clinical Commissioning Groups
  - Croydon Council
  - Croydon University Hospital
  - Business representatives
  - Faith representative
  - London Fire Brigade
  - Metropolitan Police Service
  - Public Health
  - Voluntary and Community Sector representatives
- 4.8 Since mid-March the LSP has met on a weekly basis, using technology to support virtual meetings. These meetings have provided an excellent opportunity for all partners to receive the latest updates, ask questions and coordinate actions.
- 4.9 In addition to the weekly LSP meetings, there has been daily discussions between the Leader and Cabinet, and between the Chief Executive and key partners. This has enabled information sharing to ensure decisions are made with the latest information and situation
- 4.10 In order to support key workers across Croydon, the Council quickly created a parking dispensation for NHS keyworkers to ensure they could travel to Croydon University Hospital and be confident of being able to park locally at no cost.

## **Challenges**

- 4.11 There has, as can be expected in these situations, a number of challenges to overcome in the response.
- 4.12 The nature of the Covid-19 pandemic has been one of pace. Events have changed daily, with the response from the Council and our partners having to change as a result. There have been occasions when government announcements have been made with very little, if any, notice and without accompanying guidance. This has placed significant pressure on local partners to respond urgently to announcements, but without clarity on what is required.

- 4.13 Another significant challenge is financial. The Government has announced £3.2bn of additional funding for local government in two tranches over recent weeks. The Local Government association and London Councils has identified that this covers only a fraction of the financial impact, direct and indirect, on local government. As such, Croydon's allocation within this does not cover the anticipated whole year financial impact on the Council at this stage, due to the substantial increase in demand for supporting vulnerable residents, as well as the reduction in income as a result of the lockdown. We continue to provide feedback to MHCLG regarding the costs being incurred in anticipation of further financial grants being provided in accordance with recent Ministerial statements. Further details are provided in the financial section of the report.
- 4.14 The financial challenge is not unique to Croydon Council or local government. All public services are seeing demand pressures which brings with it cost pressures in responding to Covid-19. Of particular note are the pressures facing the voluntary and community sector. These groups are providing a vital part of the Covid-19 response, with food deliveries, mutual aid and befriending services being established quickly and responding to increasing numbers of vulnerable residents. These groups have often not been eligible to government funding for businesses. The government announced funding of £750m for charities on 8 April. However, £360m was given to government departments to allocate centrally, and the remaining £370m was provided through the lottery grants process. The Government also pledged a minimum £20m towards the Big Night In fundraising. It was clear that voluntary and community groups needed urgent support and the Council therefore established an emergency fund for local groups. Further details are provided below.
- 4.15 As this is an emergent disease our knowledge has altered, sometimes on a daily basis. This has meant that guidance has been regularly changed. This has been a challenge around communication. Croydon has risen to this challenge and the public health summaries and brief guidance have often been incorporated within pan London advice.
- 4.16 Testing has been a significant challenge due to the limitations of the current test to being symptomatic with a cough and/or high temperature. Staff working on the front line have said they would like access to a test to reassure themselves they are not carrying the virus.
- 4.17 Access to personal protective equipment has been a national (and global) challenge. Through the significant efforts within our commissioning and procurement teams the borough has sourced sufficient supply for our workforce and to offer supply to our care sector if they are in urgent need. Further details are provided later in this report.

## **5. KEY ACTIVITIES**

- 5.1 As set out in the background, the impact has been wide ranging and unprecedented, with implications for every resident and business in Croydon. The lockdown measures have impacted on the way every aspect of the Council operates. This report provides updated against the most critical themes for activity in the Croydon response:
- Public Health

- Vulnerable residents
- Financial support for residents
- Adult services and care homes
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Children and schools
- Workforce and digital
- Voluntary and community sector support
- Food
- Bereavement services
- Business and supplier support
- Corporate communications
- Low traffic initiatives

## **Public Health**

- 5.2 A critical part of the Council's response to Covid-19 has been the dissemination of key public health messages, informed by Croydon's Independent Director of Public Health and the most recent evidence. The Council has established a dedicated microsite within the Croydon.gov.uk website, with a range of information and advice for different groups and issues.
- 5.3 The Public Health and Communications teams have been issuing regular communications to residents and businesses from the earliest stages of Covid-19. These began with good hygiene messages such as hand washing and sneezing (containment messages), before moving to messages regarding social distancing (delay messages) and the stay home campaign (mitigation messages).
- 5.4 In addition to the general public health messages to the whole population in Croydon, the Public Health team has produced a range of guidance messages for staff, partners and volunteers who are continuing to support residents across Croydon. These have included guidance on avoiding contact and on the safe use of personal protective equipment.
- 5.5 Our parks have remained open throughout the pandemic to ensure residents can exercise in accordance with the lockdown provisions. Our Neighbourhood teams have undertaken regular patrols within the parks, working closely with the police regarding any concerns (as the police have enforcement powers of the lockdown requirements).

## **Vulnerable residents**

- 5.6 The lock down has had a disproportionate impact on certain population groups. In addition to residents that were already struggling for a variety of reasons (health, financial, housing), other groups became vulnerable (or more vulnerable), including:
- Shielded residents:  
The NHS have identified a range of people that, due to pre-existing health conditions, would be at significant risk if they became ill with Covid-19. This nationally generated list included people with certain cancers, some organ

recipients, people with severe respiratory conditions, and conditions that increase risk of infection or suppress the immune system. These residents received a letter from the NHS confirming that they needed to stay home for at least 12 weeks. If residents did not have friends/family to undertake tasks for them, they were suddenly isolated and vulnerable.

- Furloughed workers:  
The Government provided employers with a scheme to furlough workers and receive a grant of up to £2,500 per month to support 80% of salary costs. However, many workers have therefore faced a 20% salary reduction, with financial pressures resulting.
- Unemployed:  
Workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the Covid-19 impact, or who are employed on zero hours contract and have seen their hours reduce significantly
- Homeless:  
In particular street homeless, are at a significantly higher risk due to their exposure.

5.7 The pandemic has led to an increase in requests for emergency funding for residents needing food, amenities, rent and other essentials, as well as increased demand for welfare rights advice, debt management and free school meals support, and increased support for destitute residents who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

5.8 In response to these areas of demand we have refocused our resources to offer fast turnaround on the impacts of Covid-19 on residents. In the 4 weeks since lockdown, we have:

- Moved to 7 days delivery in key areas.
- Tripled our resource to meet new requests for free school meals.
- Doubled our resource to meet the quadrupled demand for food vouchers and amenities. We have provided £22,300 in food vouchers, £2,200 emergency amenities funding, and £49,000 to facilities moves and furniture in new homes.
- Opened our welfare rights hotline from 3 part days to 5 full days a week. Since doing this they have received 384 requests for support.
- Provided advice and guidance to residents on the options available to them to protect their jobs/income/homes during lockdown. Our discretionary support team have received over 1,400 phone calls and emails from residents in need.
- Closely working with schools, voluntary sector and other council service for a joined-up sustainable response to meet vulnerable residents in need. 83% of requests are from families.

5.9 The lockdown resulted in access Croydon being decommissioned as a face to face service. An emergency duty system is in place. The number of presentations has been used to update the website and improve the resident journey.

5.10 Access Croydon staff have been redeployed, including to the contact centre, where improved technology has enabled staff to receive calls whilst working from home seven days a week. A dedicated Covid hotline and email contact

has been established to assist with urgent enquiries. Over 1,000 calls have been received with an average waiting time of only 7 seconds, and 99% of calls answered. At the same time, there has been a 42% reduction in calls to the general contact centre.

- 5.11 Croydon's outreach service 'Croydonreach' has lead on the process of initially assessing new rough sleepers to the streets of Croydon. The outreach service continues to be the boroughs response service to new rough sleepers and works with those placed in accommodation to seek longer term housing options and empower positive lifestyle changes.
- 5.12 Croydonreach works closely with the council to ensure all individuals are offered accommodation the same day as being assessed. Croydon's statutory single homeless service (SHS) has been placing those into temporary accommodation who have not met the criteria for the GLA's Covid Protect hotels, are surplus to capacity, or who are at risk of rough sleeping. In total SHS has placed 62 single homeless individuals of which 23 are rough sleepers. The GLA provision in Croydon has housed 98 people, 16 of whom were verified as rough sleeping in Croydon. Together across all provisions 76 Croydon rough sleepers have been placed.

### **Financial support for residents**

- 5.13 As set out above, the economic impact of Covid-19 means that many more residents are under financial pressure. A dedicated section within the Croydon Covid-19 microsite has been established to provide advice and support for residents in this position.
- 5.14 The Government confirmed council tax hardship funding of £500m to be distributed by local authorities. Croydon received to £4.4m of this funding. In line with government guidance, £150 (or the amount to reduce the bill to zero, if less) has been credited to the council tax accounts for residents in receipt of local council tax support. No application is required to be made by residents. Revised Council Tax bills are being sent to households as soon as possible.
- 5.15 In addition, the Council is applying this enhancement of up to £150 to anyone who makes a new council tax support application prior to 31 May 2020. Furthermore, the Council is looking at how it can provide financial assistance to other categories of residents impacted by Covid-19.
- 5.16 In addition, the Council has established a quick and simple online form for any resident wishing to defer their Council Tax payments for 2 months. As of 4 May, 3,234 residents have applied for this deferral.
- 5.17 The Council's Gateway and Housing Services continue to provide a range of support to help residents that are facing financial challenges. These include:
- Benefits advice and support
  - Rent advice
  - Emergency living expenses (e.g. for gas/electricity)
  - Debt advice and management

- 5.18 The Council has modified its collection and enforcement arrangements to support residents, notably stopping all bailiff action during this period. We have also been clear that the Council will support its council housing tenants facing financial difficulty, including halting any possession proceedings for those in arrears.
- 5.19 Parking charges were suspended in order to make it as easy as possible for residents to safely make the essential journeys that they need to take, such as shopping or health related.

### **Adult services and care homes**

- 5.20 There has been substantial media coverage in recent weeks about the impact on care homes, whose vulnerable residents are at greater risk if they contract Covid-19. Croydon has the largest care home market in London, with 230 care providers, 123 care homes (63 of whom support older people). As of 4 May, there were 1,560 residents in care homes across Croydon. 127 care home residents had died across Croydon due to Covid-19 (as reported by Public Health as of 4 May).
- 5.21 The care homes, while under significant pressure are responding well in partnership with the council and health. Gold has received daily updates on the demand for beds, the capacity within the sector and the impact of Covid-19 on care homes.
- 5.22 Over a quarter of all homes in Croydon have reported cases of Covid-19, with the largest impact on nursing homes, and in many of those homes residents have sadly passed away. The Council has enacted our Care Home System Response Plan, which includes:
- **Hospital discharge:** Seven day hospital discharge arrangements was implemented at the end of March. Care Homes have capacity to meet demand out of hospital though some packages are complex and are taking time to arrange safe discharge. In order to support the hospital and ensure they have the maximum number of beds available, emergency discharge accommodation has been secured by the Council.
  - **Workforce:** we are monitoring workforce levels across care homes on a daily basis, with homes reporting staff absence levels at around 30%. We have launched the Croydon Proud to Care campaign to support care home recruitment and Croydon Works are also supporting carer recruitment.
  - **PPE:** This is a critical requirement for Care Homes in limiting the spread of Covid-19 and supporting staff to feel safe, particularly where cases are confirmed within a home. With the global PPE supply challenges, many care homes have reported difficulties in securing supplies. The Council has established a dedicated PPE team (further details below) and is supplying emergency PPE to care homes on request 7 days a week, as well as advice about how to use it. Additional support has also been provided to care homes to help them source six weeks of stock via a pan London ordering route ahead of the implementation of new national PPE ordering system 'Clipper'.

- **Targeted Support:** Public Health and remote clinical support (Telemedicine) services are supporting homes on a 1 to 1 basis, particularly around infection control, targeting those with the highest rates.
- **Communication:** Care homes are reporting the status within their daily via an online portal. Regular calls are taking place between the Council and care home providers. This ensures the Council has the latest information, care homes feel supported, they have the latest advice and guidance, and issues are escalated without delay. There are also weekly online meetings with care home managers supplemented by support and training from St Christopher's Hospice and CCG. Newsletters distilling national guidance mixed with local updates have been provided to all care homes at least weekly during the pandemic.
- **Financial sustainability:** In order to ensure care homes have the cash flow needed to operate during these difficult times, the Council has moved to paying 4 weeks in advance and given significant provider sustainability payment as upfront support to help care homes with Covid-19 related costs.

5.23 The Government has announced significant expansion of Covid-19 testing, including specific testing for care homes. This is being coordinated by South West London Heath & Care Partnership. The Council has shared data to help identify testing priorities and locations.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

5.24 The supply of PPE has been a global issue during the pandemic, and subject to significant media coverage. The increased demand for key items such as gloves, masks and aprons has created problems for suppliers and providers.

5.25 The Council has provided advice and guidance on the use of PPE, in accordance with the government guidelines. This has included guidance for our own staff who continue to operate front line services, and key partners and providers (e.g. care homes).

5.26 A dedicated PPE team has been established to coordinate orders, secure supplies and distribute stock. The team are also responding to enquiries, offers of help (e.g. from local businesses) and requests for emergency supplies from providers. The weekly PPE requirements for council services are shown in the table below:

<b>PPE Item</b>	<b>Weekly council requirements</b>
Fluid repellent facemasks	15,071
Aprons	9,583
Gloves	22,148
Eye protection spectacles	290
Hand sanitiser	805
Hand wash	644

5.27 Despite this significant demand, the Council has maintained sufficient supplies for council staff and at no stage has services been impacted by a lack of PPE.

- 5.28 In addition, and where required, emergency PPE supplies have been provided to suppliers (including Care Homes, Home Care, Children's Residential Providers & Supported Living providers), particularly in adult services. As at 28 April, 118 emergency PPE supply packs had been given to providers where stocks were low.
- 5.29 Ahead of a national ordering system ('Clipper') due to be implemented by Government, we are supporting providers to order PPE through pan London procurement routes, with contingency supplies of equipment for a six-week period.

## **Children and schools**

- 5.30 The Government announced the closure of schools with effect from Friday 20 March. However, schools were required to continue providing places for children of key workers and vulnerable children. This has required significant coordination with the Education Service, and joint work with all schools, colleges and other education and childcare settings to ensure there is sufficient provision.
- 5.31 In line with government guidance, Croydon has been operating on the following key principles:
- Schools and childcare providers, should continue to provide care / provision for children and young people who are vulnerable, and children whose parents / carers are critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response.
  - The majority of our schools remain open to provide childcare / provision to vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers.
  - Where there have been issues with staffing levels we have developed 'hubs' within locality areas to provide the provision for one or more schools. This has ensured that enough places are available for all children that require it.
  - If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent/carer who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them if their children cannot safely stay at home or a bespoke plan will be delivered at home.
- 5.32 The number of children attending school has varied each day, ranging from 765 to 857 between 27 April and 1 May. The Education Team are in daily contact with schools regarding their plans and staffing levels.
- 5.33 Schools have continued to provide education for children, with virtual lessons and homework packs provided. The Department for Education announced in late April that the Government would provide digital devices for disadvantaged children who most need it to carry out schoolwork at home. Local authorities have been given responsibility for this.
- 5.34 Each local authority will be provided a fixed number of laptops and tablets to be allocated to children within their area based on the number of care leavers and children with social workers that do not have a tablet/laptop and the number of disadvantaged year 10 pupils who do not have access to a laptop/tablet. The Council has worked with schools and academies to provide data to the Department for Education. We expect to receive and distribute in the region of

1,800 laptops for families known to children's social care. Academies are applying directly for disadvantaged year 10 pupils. We anticipate receiving up to 100 laptops for pupils in maintained schools.

- 5.35 Schools in Croydon have been proactive in ensuring that there is food provision for those pupils in receipt of free school meals as well as those that are experiencing food poverty. Settings are using different approaches to continue to provide meals including packed lunches, hot lunches, food parcels and supermarket vouchers.
- 5.36 Public Health guidance has been produced for schools in relation to safety and use of PPE, updated regularly following Government guidance. An appendix to the council's safeguarding policy has been shared with schools to support with any concerns and how to escalate these.
- 5.37 Children's social care have maintained contact with vulnerable children during Covid-19, adapting services as required to ensure the safety of all. Cases were categorised into priority 1, 2 and 3 according to need, as follows:

<b>Children's social care</b>	<b>Case numbers</b>
Priority 1	397
Priority 2	1,540
Priority 3	2,172

## **Workforce and digital**

- 5.38 Within the council, our absence levels due to sickness or self-isolation due to suspected contact remain low and we have maintained workforce capacity overall consistently in excess of 80%, including facilitating periods of annual leave to provide rest and support family life.
- 5.39 Our workforce has been resilient with staff stepping forward to be deployed in essential services and also in adapting to remote working to ensure we have continued to perform well as a council.
- 5.40 We have deployed 130 staff to work across other services including support for:
- Registrars
  - Shielding hub
  - Business rate grant support
  - Parks enforcement
- 5.41 Like all organisations, the lockdown has required us to work very differently. The Council already had technology and policies in place to support agile working, however, this has had to quickly respond to significantly higher numbers of staff working and accessing systems from home. Croydon Digital Service delivered a range of improvements including:
- accelerated the roll out of Microsoft Teams to all staff within days of the lockdown, enabling staff to communicate and collaborate easily, with accompanying guidance and training to support staff
  - Installed additional servers to increase the capacity and resilience of the system

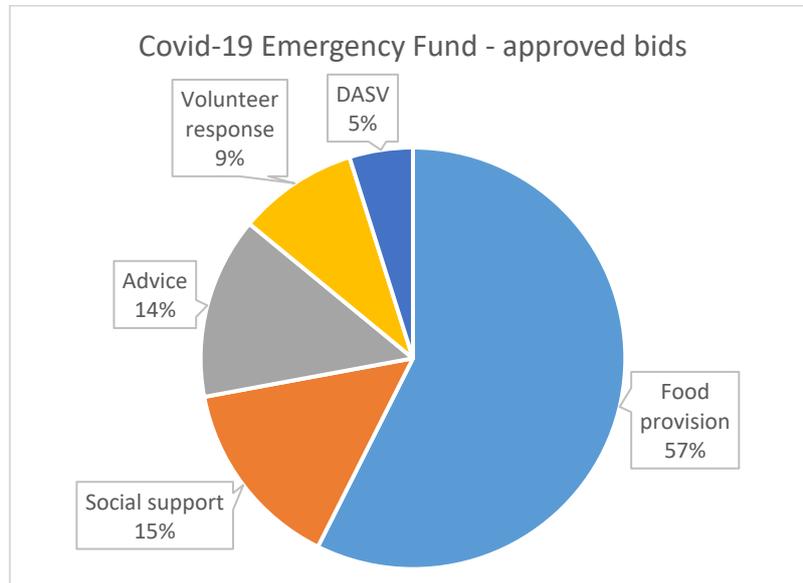
- Created online platforms to support data collection, collation and reporting across the organization
- Quickly established new telephony systems to support services operating without face to face provisions

## **Voluntary and Community Sector support**

- 5.42 As set out above, Covid-19 has created a significant increase in vulnerable residents for a variety of reasons. Many of these residents have turned to the voluntary and community sector, and the council is working closely with the sector to provide support to the most vulnerable residents.
- 5.43 Despite the social distancing requirements, many voluntary and community groups are responding to the pandemic and offering new services, or redesigning services to continue supporting vulnerable residents during the lock down.
- 5.44 A weekly webinar has been held to provide the latest guidance and information for VCS groups across Croydon. Attended by an average of 40 organisations, the webinars have included a regular update from the Director of Public Health, as well as updates on key areas of work by different organisations. The session is interactive, with lots of opportunity for questions and sharing of information.
- 5.45 In addition, there has been regular contact between the Council and the VCS infrastructure organisations (Asian Resource Centre, BME Forum, Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association and Croydon Voluntary Action). This has ensured the Council receives regular feedback on the activities, pressures and issues facing VCS groups in Croydon.
- 5.46 However, the sector is also facing financial challenges as a result of the community needs from Covid-19, and a reduction in income (e.g. lettings, classes). Many VCS organisations are also ineligible for the government fiscal measures that are offering support for individuals and businesses.
- 5.47 The Council therefore established a new fund titled 'Croydon's VCS Covid-19 Emergency Fund' to support VCS groups that are responding directly to Covid-19 in Croydon above and beyond their normal activities and, as a result, are facing funding challenges. The maximum bid amount is £10,000 and it can only be used to meet the costs of delivering services directly to residents of Croydon in response to Covid-19.
- 5.48 Details were published on the Council's website, together with a simple application process. This web page also contained other information to support VCS groups:
- Links to other funding available
  - Support for VCS orgs that pay the council rent
  - Offer of 121 support and advice
- 5.49 As of 23 April 2020, 51 bids had been received for the Covid-19 emergency fund. Of these:
- 16 bids had been approved, totalling £102,446

- 19 bids had been declined, totalling £129,643
- 16 bids were under consideration, or further information was being sought, totalling £109,045

5.50 The chart below provides a breakdown of the approved bids.



## Food

- 5.51 Food supplies has been one of the biggest challenges for vulnerable residents. There are residents that are unable to leave their homes to shop for food and supplies, and online delivery services have been overwhelmed.
- 5.52 There has also been a significant increase in residents requiring support from food banks. There has been a significant increase in the number of food banks operating in Croydon as a result.
- 5.53 Croydon has 11,616 'shielded' residents (as of 4 May) that have been identified by the NHS as needing to stay in their homes for at least 12 weeks. 5,765 of these residents have responded to the shielding letter and registered, with 2,305 unable to secure basic supplies. New referrals are being made every day as new vulnerable residents are identified. The Council is using telephone and text to contact everyone that is identified as needing to shield to confirm what support they require.
- 5.54 The Government is providing food parcels to shielded residents direct from wholesalers. As of 4 May, 6,261 government food parcels have been delivered in Croydon. This is increasing, with 680 further deliveries booked.
- 5.55 However, there can be a time lag between residents registering for these and receiving them. The Council has therefore established a food hub, which can make emergency food deliveries for residents in need. To date, 908 emergency food packages have been delivered by the Council. We are also working closely with the voluntary and community sector, referring residents with less urgent or ongoing support needs to them.

- 5.56 All three existing Food Stops, a partnership between the Council and VCS groups, are still in operation and now include food deliveries where required – New Addington, Selsdon, Thornton Heath. Plans for the fourth Food Stop at Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church in Purley have been fast forwarded and it is now up and running.
- 5.57 The food stop local collection point service has also been expanded. In addition to the two existing collection points, two further collection points have been established. The Council is coordinating food deliveries from FareShare, with 3 tonnes distributed through the food stops during week commencing 13 April.

### **Bereavement services**

- 5.58 The Covid-19 pandemic has created a higher than normal number of deaths. Croydon is the lead borough for the South London coronial area (made up of Croydon, Bromley, Bexley and Sutton). Croydon is also a member of the London Mortality Planning Group and has established a mortality planning group for the south London area, including representatives from Sutton, Bromley and Bexley, made up of representatives involved in the death management process.
- 5.59 In addition, Croydon has established a local mortality operational group for the death management process ensuring that information is shared, issues and solutions are identified to mitigate any risk of failure of the death management process.
- 5.60 Working in partnership with Croydon University Hospital, we have enabled and facilitated the siting of 3 additional units for body storage increasing capacity by 140 units. In addition, 2 units have been sited at the hospital premises providing capacity to store a further 100 units. Currently we are operating within capacity at between 50-60% (as of 4 May). There has been strong collaboration with funeral directors during this time.
- 5.61 Croydon has developed and trained 12 volunteer redeployees to assist with the increased demand for death registration. The online tool used to train volunteers has been developed by Croydon and is being shared pan-London and beyond. The use of trained redeployed staff has increased capacity from 67 to 290 possible registrations per week. The service is operating within capacity.
- 5.62 All cemetery and crematorium grounds are open daily and social distancing measures are in place for services to enable mourners to attend funerals. Croydon has reduced direct cremation costs for the period of 10 weeks to assist residents facing funeral poverty and to assist in the death management process. Croydon has the capacity within existing resources for 30 burials per week.

### **Business and supplier support**

- 5.63 As well as the impact on people, Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the economy. It is clear that the virus will lead to a global recession. Businesses

across multiple industries have been required to close, with orders and cash flow reducing to near zero almost instantly.

- 5.64 Croydon is a major business centre, and the impact on the local economy will therefore be significant. With 14,010 businesses operating from 9,179 business premises, Croydon is the third largest business base in south London and the thirteenth largest in London. Whilst updated statistics are not available at the time of writing, we anticipate a significant increase in unemployment. Local data suggests a seven fold increase is likely, with low skilled, younger and women affected the most.
- 5.65 Croydon Works is proactively contacting businesses that are accessing Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to understand the employees' needs and share the available job opportunities. They are also working with Job Centre Plus on focusing its response on sectors where people are most likely to lose their jobs; and on sectors where job opportunities are likely to increase (e.g. security, logistics and wholesale/cash & carry, care sector).
- 5.66 The Council immediately established an external business taskforce and we are meeting regularly to gather and share information. The taskforce is comprised of leading external stakeholders from Croydon and London, including Croydon BID, Purley BID, Central Parade BID, FSB, LCCI, London growth Hub, Coast to Capital and London LEPs.
- 5.67 The government has launched a range of schemes to support businesses, including staff furlough payments, grants, loans and business rate support. Croydon is processing the changed business rates bills for those who are now entitled to relief from business rates, e.g. the 100% rates relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses. This has included suspending direct debit collections from such businesses.
- 5.68 Croydon has been allocated £60.6m to support businesses with grants of £10k or £25k payable, based on business rate values. However, it has proved challenging to get businesses to complete the simple application process for the government grants. £36.42m has been paid to 2,684 Croydon businesses as of 4 May. This equates to 64% of the business grant budget. There have been more applications made which are being processed but there are approximately 1,100 further businesses who the Council believes will be entitled to a grant who have yet to apply. The Council is proactively contacting all businesses to ensure they are aware of this funding and to support them through the simple verification process and make payments as quickly as possible. All Councillors are asked to encourage local businesses to apply for this funding.
- 5.69 The Council has already spoken to over 1,000 businesses and is directing people to the business advice hubs, LEPs and Croydon BIDs for further support.
- 5.70 Many Businesses in Croydon are over £51,000 rateable value and are therefore not eligible for the retail, hospitality and leisure Grant of £25,000. Croydon BID with the Council, MPs and partners launched a campaign called Raise The Bar to increase the threshold up to and including £150,000.

- 5.71 We have created a business survey to help us to understand exactly how our business community in Croydon is being impacted by the Covid-19 crisis and the continued lockdown. The responses will also help us to shape our recovery. We plan to repeat the survey at regular intervals to track progress on impact and recovery.
- 5.72 As Croydon is South London's Hub for Business support, London Growth Hub offers free one-to-one support via a dedicated business adviser based in the London Growth Hub sites. They will arrange a one-to-one call or video meeting using a variety of platforms including Skype, Zoom and WhatsApp. Businesses can book a one-hour call to speak with one of the dedicated advisers.
- 5.73 Croydon businesses can also benefit from the Coast to Capital Growth Hub, which supports businesses in the area to achieve their growth ambitions through the provision of fully funded business reviews and diagnostics, referrals and information. The Coast to Capital Growth Hub provides free and impartial government funded business support.
- 5.74 As a key purchaser of local services the Council is ensuring it provides as much support as possible:
- Enhanced payments to care providers, to ensure that they can maintain services to our residents at a time of increased costs for them;
  - Advice, guidance, newsletters and signposting are all being offered to local businesses and networks;
  - A Croydon Cultural Relief Fund has been established to support organisations in this area;
  - Additional loans through the Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund have been provided;
  - Availability of additional supplier support on a case by case basis.
- 5.75 The Council is most appreciative of the ongoing commitment and support from our contracted suppliers to maintain services and supplies to the council and people of Croydon during the Covid-19 outbreak. Some suppliers are struggling to meet their full contractual obligations, and as such we are working with suppliers to alter our requirements, temporarily suspend some services, or change ways of working to do what is necessary for our community. The Council is actively working with our contracted suppliers to provide support where possible, so that required services can be maintained during the Covid-19 outbreak with service delivery resuming as soon as possible once the outbreak is over.
- 5.76 As mentioned, central government has set out a package of temporary and targeted measures to support businesses through this period of disruption caused by Covid-19, and a range of grants has been established by the Council. Providers seeking relief are supported to maximise the above support options in the first instance, and will be expected to mitigate against the financial impact as far as possible, prior to requesting additional relief from the Council.
- 5.77 In order to support contracted suppliers, the Council has:
- sent communication out to all suppliers providing information and a single point of contact for queries and issues

- made contact with all Tier 1 providers, Community Fund providers, and other identified critical suppliers
- commissioned an early payment process option
- established a supplier relief process for additional support requested

## **Communications**

- 5.78 Good communications is critical in any emergency. Our communications activities have been multifaceted, with a number of key objectives:
- Inform the public about the actions they can take to minimise the spread of Coronavirus in Croydon, minimise panic and help keep people safe
  - Promote the work and advice of the Government, Public Health England and the NHS, and to counter misinformation.
  - Explain the Council's response and changes to normal services or events
  - Promote the council's work to support its vulnerable residents and the partnership work with the local VCS
  - Promote the council's work to support schools
  - Promote the council's work to support local business and signpost to other help available
  - Provide reassurance to local residents, businesses and key stakeholders
- 5.79 As mentioned earlier, a dedicated microsite has been established to offer a range of information and messages. This has been critical in the fast changing environment that partners have been working in.
- 5.80 Key messages have been issued on a regular basis with up to date information, help and advice. This have been provided across social media channels from multiple sources including corporate council channels, as well as the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members. These have also been powerful in recognising the continued work of council staff, key workers and volunteers and been supported by the '#croydontogether' campaign.
- 5.81 An eight-page special edition of the council's residents magazine - Your Croydon.- was delivered through every door to make sure that every resident in the borough had a digest of all key information, help and support available locally.
- 5.82 Our communications team has also worked to target activities to the most vulnerable. A local campaign around domestic violence has launched to ensure those who are in need of help know where to access it locally. This partnership work - the council, FJC and the police - includes targeted communications digitally through our social media channels, new stories, posters and engagement work.

## **Low traffic initiatives**

- 5.83 In response to the pandemic the Council is introducing several low traffic initiatives that will temporarily reallocate road space to better reflect the current use patterns and to create safer spaces for walking and cycling. These measures will also help ensure residents can more easily maintain social

distancing practices, particularly at high footfall pinch points such as the entrances to some of our parks and shops on our high streets.

5.84 Temporary street closures are taking place in two ways:

- **Type 1 (Healthy Streets):**

Closure of streets that are prone to rat-running traffic and excessive speeds, which making it difficult for the public to make use of the street for exercise, essential travel and to maintain social distancing. A 'point closure' at one end of the street using planters or barriers operating 24 hours a day ensures access is maintained for residents and deliveries etc. whilst allowing local residents to occupy the road space outside their home for exercise and other activities. 31 locations have been identified.

- **Type 2 (Exercise Zones):**

Closure of streets for part of the day only similar to the play street initiative. These are resident led closures whereby volunteers would close streets frequently, ideally daily, so that residents can benefit from a truly traffic free environment. 5 locations have been identified.

5.85 The Council is also looking to implement several other initiatives to help our residents' maintain social distancing whilst enjoying outdoor space these include:

- **Entrances to parks, open spaces and places of public interest:**

Creating additional footway space at narrow pinch points into parks, open spaces and places of interest such as high street shops, by sectioning off the carriageway or suspending on-street parking facilities. 13 locations have been identified.

- **Improved cycling facilities:**

Introduction of segregated cycle lanes on key corridors starting off with London Road outside Croydon University Hospital providing cyclists with the space they need to travel in safely.

- **Temporary 20mph speed limit:** the Council will introduce temporary 20mph speed limits to make them safer for cyclists, starting with London Road between St James's Road and Thornton Heath Pond.

## 6. FUTURE FOCUS

6.1 The current priority is maintaining support and services to those affected, as set out above. Whilst this focus is on the support needed during the pandemic and lock down, we are clear that the impact will last into the medium and long term.

6.2 Work is underway to develop the Council's recovery strategy, both for direct services but also for the whole borough. Recovery will be a framework of activities that need to be restored, retained or reinvented and not a return to as was. Recovery activities are expected to fall within 4 key areas of work:

- Continued support for vulnerable residents
- Environment and sustainability, focused on short/medium term improvements
- Economic recovery and support for businesses
- Building on the strong local community structures that have provided support to residents

- 6.3 Services will continue to adjust and change as they respond to the needs of residents and businesses in a very different environment. The use of remote technology has been adopted rapidly and widely in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the council will be identifying how this can support efficient and effective service delivery.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 A key aspect of Council's response has been identifying and responding to the risks and issues that Covid-19 has created.
- 7.2 A dedicated Covid-19 risk register has been established, which is managed by the Coordination Group with regular reports to Gold to ensure the risks are well managed and mitigating actions is taken.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 There has been no formal consultations, due to the urgency needs in responding to the Covid-19 emergency. However, communications with partners has been key, as set out earlier in the report.
- 8.2 Communication with staff has also been critical. As services have been redesigned and staff redeployed to support front line services, regular communications with all staff has been key. Communications have included direct emails, intranet articles, briefings and Q&A sessions with the Chief Executive.

## **9 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 The Government has recognised the impact that Covid-19 has had on public services across the country. At the end of March the Government announced emergency funding for local government of £1.6bn, of which Croydon was allocated £9.4m.
- 9.2 On 18 April, the Government announced a further £1.6bn, of which Croydon has been awarded £10.5m. In total we have been awarded £19.9m to date.
- 9.3 Regardless of these funding allocations, it is clear that this will not cover all the anticipated costs faced by the Council.
- 9.4 MHCLG are collating data on LA costs relating to COVID 19. Including additional expenditure, lost income and planned savings not achievable, to help understand the costs nationally and provide the right level of funding to support local authorities. The LGA has indicated that, nationally, the estimated financial impact is four or five times the amounts committed by government so far. Ministers have indicated on a number of occasions that they recognise the financial impact on local authorities and are committed to supporting local government financially.
- 9.5 Work is continuing to understand and track all costs and lost income

opportunities arising as a result of Covid- 19. To date the Council has been awarded £19.9m of funding and we are working closely with MHCLG and London Councils to monitor, track, record and report costs.

- 9.6 There is a risk that the government may not fund all costs incurred as a result of Covid-19 and we know now that our costs will be greater than the funding allocated to date but at the time of writing we have no reason to believe this with both the Secretary of State and Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government have said in letters to local authorities that they will be funded for costs arising as a result of Covid-19.

Approved by: Lisa Taylor, Director of Finance, Investment and Risk

## **10. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 10.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law makes the following comments on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance.
- 10.2 The Coronavirus Act 2020 is the government's main legislative change in response to the pandemic. Most of its provisions came into effect on 25 March 2020 but detailed further legislation in the form of statutory instruments and government guidance have been issued since that date and continue to be published. The Act has temporarily modified duties and powers relating to social care, mental health, registration of deaths, inquests, the regulation of investigatory powers, gatherings events and premises, the postponement of elections, virtual local authority meetings and protection from eviction. Other changes to existing legislation and statutory guidance continue to be monitored by the legal service.

Approved by Sandra Herbert, Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 11.1 The Covid-19 has had a very direct impact on people across Croydon, including staff.
- 11.2 As well as our responsibilities to residents, we have a duty of care to all staff. The Council as continued to ensure that staff have the guidance and equipment they need to carry out their work safely. This includes PPE.
- 11.3 Additional monitoring data has been collected regarding Covid-19, capturing any staff that are self-isolating or presenting symptoms on a daily basis. This has enabled the council to support both individual staff, as well as protect the wider workforce as much as possible. As of 4 May, the figures for Croydon Council were:
- Self-isolating (at risk): 237 (out of 3,769 staff)
  - Self-isolating (contact): 29
  - Covid-19 symptoms: 17

- 11.4 It was with great sadness that the council confirmed the death of a member of staff, Asha Walrond, on 22 April. Asha worked as a customer services assistant at the Timebridge Centre, New Addington. Additional support has been provided to colleagues at this difficult time.
- 11.5 A corporate redeployment process has been established, to enable managers to call on support from outside of their service areas if required, and ensure that priority services continue to be delivered.

Approved by: Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources

## **12. EQUALITY IMPACT**

- 12.1 There is no direct equality impacts arising from this report.
- 12.2 The impact of the virus is far reaching. The combined and unprecedented impact on the local economy, both on businesses and the workforce, will exacerbate inequalities, where some parts of our communities are disproportionately impacted for the short, medium and long term. The Council has been acutely aware of the disproportionate impact that the virus and lock down can have on particular demographics, such as older residents and those with pre-existing health conditions. As set out above, significant actions have been taken to safeguard vulnerable residents.
- 12.3 There are some people who are clinically vulnerable, who are currently shielded, and who need some form of additional support to keep them shielded for this time and beyond. The Council has worked with partners to support residents, particularly the most vulnerable, prioritising key services and redeploying resources to provide support where it is most needed.
- 12.4 The lock down has had a disproportionate impact on certain population groups. In addition to residents that were already struggling for a variety of reasons (health, financial, housing), other groups became vulnerable (or more vulnerable). These include shielded residents, furloughed workers and those who are homeless.
- 12.5 Significant actions have been taken to safeguard vulnerable residents and certain population groups, these are set out in section 5 of the report.
- 12.6 There has been emerging data to suggest that BAME residents are disproportionately affected by Covid-19. The government has launched a review, led by the NHS and Public Health England. The Director for Public Health in Croydon has already engaged with national colleagues to ensure Croydon is involved in the review.
- 12.7 Recovery activities will focus on continued support for vulnerable residents and building on the strong local community structures that have provided support to residents.

Approved by: Yvonne Okiyo, Equalities Manager

### **13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

13.1 There has been a noticeable improvement in air quality and pollution levels across Croydon (as well as London, UK and globally). This provides an opportunity to take action in order to maintain the improved environment. The Leader of the Council has therefore asked the Croydon Commission for Climate Change to refocus its attention on short and medium term actions over the next 3 years.

### **14. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

14.1 The police have reported a reduction in many crime rates during the Covid-19 pandemic.

14.2 However, there is concern about the potential for increased domestic abuse and sexual violence as a result of the lockdown, with people spending more time in doors. There is also the risk that it is harder for victims to report crimes or request help if they remain in lock down.

14.3 The FJC service has continued to be delivered throughout the lockdown. The service expanded to offer 7 days a week provision, to maximize the opportunity for anyone to contact them for support.

14.4 The Council has worked with partners and issued regular communications to raise awareness of the services available.

### **15. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 **WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

**NO**

15.2 The Director of Policy & Partnership advises that this report provides updates only, with no decisions that impact on data.

Approved by: Gavin Handford, Director of Policy & Partnership

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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Gavin Handford, Director of Policy & Partnership
<b>APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:</b>	None
<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b>	None