

Lancashire's response to Covid-19 Update

Background

- Internal scrutiny committee last looked at the council's response to the coronavirus pandemic in September 2020.
- It was agreed that an update would be provided in January.

Issues previously examined included:

1. Maintaining democratic leadership during a crisis
2. An update on service provision
3. Financial impact of COVID
4. Supporting the social care sector including domiciliary care workers
5. Protecting vulnerable children
6. Building pan-Lancashire working
7. Democratic involvement in resilience forums
8. Next steps

Points 3, 4 and 5 were picked up separately and in depth by the Budget Scrutiny Panel, the Health Scrutiny Committee and the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – this will continue.

Democratic leadership/Meetings

- The approach outlined in September remains in place
- Virtual Meetings still taking place
- Scrutiny work-plan operational
- Equipment and training provided and protocols developed
- Political briefings including opposition briefings continue
- Updates continue to be provided
- Bite size briefings taking place

Service delivery

- The impact on service delivery has varied depending on the level of tier/lockdown
- Key focus remains on care related services
- Resources remain concentrated on supporting most vulnerable
- Most services that were paused during the 1st wave were restored
- As explained previously, decisions on long term cessation of activity/changed approaches will be reviewed as part of improvement journey

Service delivery Continued

- Wherever possible staff are enabled to work from home ongoing improvements to equipment and systems are being introduced – e.g. move to Microsoft 365/Teams
- We have completed a programme to make buildings Covid secure and to address other H&S requirements - risk assessments under ongoing refresh/renew process
- We continue to learn from the innovative ways of working that we introduced in our response to the pandemic and to capturing learning from elsewhere.

Additional support to Lancashire/business and communities

- Continue to work with partners to support vulnerable residents
- Covid winter grant – administering distribution of £3.92m covid winter grant aimed at tackling hunger and warmth problems - action to date – free school meals support, developing approaches to help tackle fuel poverty
- Supporting free school meals recipients/schools during current lockdown.
- Working with LRF to assist roll out of vaccination – including supporting volunteer programme

Finance wider support

- National schemes -
 - Furlough at 80% up to 2,500 per month.
 - Self-employed grants 80% of average trading profits up to £7,500.
 - Govt backed loan schemes (until the end of January 2021)
 - Business Support Grants
 - Business Rates holiday
 - Reduced VAT rate for hospitality and tourism

Financial position

- Expenditure Pressures Grant – LCC has received c£76m. Used to support additional costs of Covid -19 such as Adult Social Care, Childrens Social Care, PPE, emergency provider payments.
- Infection Control Grant – c£31m
- Hospital Discharges Funding – claimed monthly from NHS. Forecast to be c£11m
- Test and Trace Grant - £6.3m

Financial position

- Winter Grant (£3.9m) - direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic
- Contain Outbreak Management Fund - £4 per head/£8 per head dependent upon the “Tier” that an area is in
- Transport Funding – regular returns and new funding announcements made
- Sales Fees and Charges – quarterly claims submitted
- Food Payments – paid directly to District Councils for distribution

Financial position

- Additional funding announced as part of the spending review (SR20) and provisional settlement for 2021/22:
- £1.55bn additional expenditure pressures – LCC provisional allocation c£26m
- £670m council tax support (hardship fund) – LCC provisional allocation c£11.4m

Financial position

- £762m fund 75% of the irrecoverable loss of council tax and business rates in 2020/21 – LCC current forecast £20.7m
- Sales, fees and charges (SFC) compensation scheme to be extended into the first quarter of 2021/22. This is based on claims submitted on a quarterly basis.
- The short term position (in year) for the council is positive with COVID pressures expected to hit in the medium to long term.

Pan-Lancashire Working

- Still Co-ordinating activity through the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF)
- Multi agency working – includes district councils, emergency services, health, category 1 partners, military etc. plus government and LGA input
- The LRF is designed to play the lead co-ordinating role in emergency situations
- The activity has evolved to adapt to changing circumstances, we continue to model emerging trends and shaping potential responses – learning is shared and captured with other LRFs
- We continue to engage with with multiple national bodies to capture and share learning.

Next steps

- We remain in the response phase of this emergency - the position continues to evolve
- Recovery activity largely paused as we deal with the current wave.
- Services/staff continue to face significant pressures and the ongoing impact should not be underestimated