

Executive Business Report

Birmingham City Council

City Council

15 September 2020



Subject: Update on Birmingham City Council's response to COVID-19

Report of: Cabinet

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Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, following the previous report that was brought to City Council in June 2020.
- 1.2. In addition, this report provides an update on work that the Council is doing to understand the differential impact of the pandemic on different communities in Birmingham, and how this information is helping to shape our strategy for recovery.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the report be noted.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. As we head into the autumn, we are seeing a gradual return to a semblance of normality across Birmingham; schools are welcoming back children for the new term, shops and small businesses are re-opening their doors for customers, and we are finally able to socialise with the friends and family that we missed during lockdown. As the worst of the pandemic passes, Birmingham can begin to look towards a brighter, and more hopeful, future.

- 3.2. In doing so we will not forget the immense toll that Covid-19 has had on our city, and for those families and communities who have lost loved ones, life will never return to 'normal'. We share their pain and sadness, and extend our greatest sympathies to all those who have experienced loss as a result of the pandemic.
- 3.3. Despite the easing of lockdown, we cannot be complacent. Covid-19 still presents a significant risk to both public health and the economy. Around the country we have seen other cities and regions go back into lockdown as infection rates rise, and so we ask everyone to stay vigilant and abide by social distancing guidelines to ensure that this does not happen in Birmingham. Within the Council, planning for recovery is taking place alongside planning for a 'second wave', understanding that the pathway to recovery is unlikely to be linear and that we may see some parts of our economy start to recover before others. As always, we are working closely with both local and national partners to monitor case rates, share information and best practice, and plan for any future outbreaks should they occur.
- 3.4. The impact of Covid-19 will continue to reverberate across our city, and across the rest of the world, for the foreseeable future. We are only at the very beginning of our recovery journey, and it is likely that our lives will look very different for a very long time. As a Council, it is important that we commit to learning the hard lessons of Covid-19 and recommit to building a fairer, more sustainable city where every person can live up to their full potential.
- 3.5. Details in relation to specific areas of response can be found as follows:
- Decision making; pages 2 to 4
 - Health & Wellbeing; pages 4 to 12
 - Education, Skills and Children's Wellbeing; pages 12 to 23
 - Communities (including Housing, Bereavement Services); pages 24 to 35
 - Street Scene & Parks (including Waste Management); pages 35 to 37
 - Transport; pages 37 to 43
 - Business Support; pages 44 to 47
 - Council Finances (including Corporate Procurement); pages 47 to 52
 - Recovery Planning; pages 53 to 57

4. Council decision making during Covid-19

- 4.1.1. The City Council is a statutory responder, in the same context as the police and fire service with legal duties to act in an emergency. It is therefore required to respond effectively with a recognised command structure that is empowered to

make the rapid decisions that are necessary in an emergency. This has been facilitated through the Council's Emergency and Business Continuity Plans, after a Major Incident was declared in March 2020, in accordance with the provisions of the Council's constitution (Part E3 Section 3.3). The Council's approach has changed to deliver an accountable command and control system to ensure that the needs of residents are met. This has meant that the normal rules around council decision-making have changed to reflect the different state the Council and the city are in as the global pandemic continues.

- 4.1.2. Whilst the change in governance arrangements has meant that many Covid-19 related decisions were made via the command structure, Cabinet members have played an active part in decision making and have been regularly briefed on key issues by Council Officers. Cabinet took a leading role in shaping the council's response to several areas including economic recovery, the approach to bereavement, support to rough sleepers, access to recreational space and the phased reopening of schools. Although the command structure remains in place, as the pandemic continues, we are now working to a system where the vast majority of Covid-19 decisions are taken with Cabinet or Cabinet Member oversight, where required.
- 4.1.3. Cabinet also led work in highlighting weaknesses in the national response to the pandemic particularly around the lack of available PPE.

Local Covid-19 Outbreak Engagement Board

- 4.1.4. The Local Covid-19 Outbreak Engagement Board was established in June 2020, as a sub-committee of the Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board. The purpose of the Board is to provide political ownership and public-facing engagement and communication for outbreak response in Birmingham. The Board's role is also to ensure that the Test and Trace response in Birmingham is delivering the right interventions to protect the health and wellbeing of citizens.
- 4.1.5. Its membership includes representation from across the political spectrum and partners in health, police and the community and voluntary sector. The Board is chaired by the Leader of the Council.

Covid-19 Decision Log

- 4.1.6. To ensure maximum transparency, decisions made by the Council relating to Covid-19 are published in a Decision Log.
- 4.1.7. This document sets out key decisions undertaken as part of the Council's response to the pandemic and actions taken after a Major Incident was declared, showing dates of decisions and the reasons for them, who took responsibility, what cost was involved and member consultation. These range from setting up a food distribution hub while the national scheme was being set up and discussions around a regional mortuary, to closing city centre markets, sourcing personal protective equipment (PPE) and buying free school meal vouchers to ensure our most vulnerable youngsters did not go hungry.

4.1.8. The Decision Log shows the tremendous amount of hard work that continues across the council, mostly behind the scenes and we acknowledge the continued efforts of staff and partners. The decision log can be found [here](#).

5. Health & Wellbeing

5.1. Adult Social Care

Supporting and protecting our shielded and vulnerable

- 5.1.1. Adult Social Care has continued to work with colleagues from across the council to co-ordinate efforts to support and protect our shielded and vulnerable cohort, whilst ensuring efforts are not duplicated.
- 5.1.2. It has provided additional support and advised officers who have worked closely with regional partners through West Midlands Association of Directors Adult Social Service (WMADASS) to support sharing of good practice, regional mapping and escalation of issues including shielding and food distribution across the West Midlands.
- 5.1.3. During the initial response to the emergency situation, the directorate refocused its Neighbourhood Network Schemes programme to support the COVID-19 response and commissioned Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) to lead on capturing, coordinating, and sharing community activities responding to COVID-19 under their #Covid19SupportBrum partnership. Sector leads were identified across a number of vulnerable groups including care homes, learning disabilities, mental health and carers. This was to ensure a timely exchange of intelligence with Adult Social Care and the command structures of the council. This enabled a partnership approach to situations between Adult Social Care, the provider sector and sector leads.
- 5.1.4. National Shielding was officially paused at the end of July 2020. Any reintroduction of shielding would be a ministerial decision, as opposed to a decision within the gift of the Council. There are 31,000 people in Birmingham on the shielded list and updated data continues to arrive on a daily basis.

Community response

- 5.1.5. The core structures that supported the city-wide response to the Covid-19 crisis remain largely in place. These include:
 - The network of thematic organisations
 - The locality leads as part of the early help offer (Children's Partnership)
 - The NNS network.

- The maintenance of the database of services offered by R2W (Routes to Wellbeing).
- 5.1.6. These networks are still meeting and the funded capacity that came online during the crisis currently remains in place, but is proposed to be strengthened to support a locality based response through use of the Emergency Assistance Grant.
- 5.1.7. The council has seen changes to some of the support networks that were available during the peak of the pandemic; for example:
- The mutual aid network – parts of this is still in place, but many of the participants have had to return to work reducing the availability of support;
 - During the pandemic ‘Safe and Well’ checks were planned for individuals who were shielded and had not responded to any attempts to contact them via letter, phone or email. The Council called on the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) for mutual aid to undertake visits to over 1,000 ‘uncontactable’ shielded individuals, to support the visits being undertaken by Council staff. The WMFS visits are ongoing, but they have indicated that they are unlikely to be able to continue beyond September 2020. If there is a requirement to undertake Safe and Well checks in future, then Council staff may need to be deployed to undertake this activity.
- 5.1.8. The directorate have continued to work with the Council's Insight Programme to look at vulnerability across the city to understand and develop policies and strategies to support vulnerable citizens.

Prevention and Communities Grant

- 5.1.9. Alongside this, organisations funded through Prevention and Communities Grants have also refocused their activities. This has allowed a range of actions to be taken to support the shielded and vulnerable cohort, including: safe and well checks; wellbeing calls to vulnerable adults in the community; food delivery and during the winter period there will also be a focus on encouraging flu jabs for eligible vulnerable adults.
- 5.1.10. The infrastructure of the Adult Social Care Prevention and Communities Grants was also mirrored by the Birmingham Children’s Partnership to provide urgent resources to the front line for children and families.
- 5.1.11. As part of the city’s recovery journey, this has opened a longer term dialogue with regards to an all age grant prospectus, in order to ensure a whole life course approach to investment within the community and voluntary sector. It also helps to ensure that the services available to vulnerable citizens are not unnecessarily fragmented by age segmentation of funding streams.

- 5.1.12. The sector leads are now also working with BVSC in their coordinating role to establish infrastructures which will form part of the recovery journey whilst also recognising that support to localised lockdowns will continue to be required.
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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 5.1.14. The PPE group continues to support teams across the council, independent care homes and home care providers, personal assistants, informal carers and others who need PPE to continue to deliver critical services.
- 5.1.15. Demand for PPE remains high. The PPE group has worked with colleagues in the Facilities Cell to address deficiencies in supply through obtaining PPE from alternative sources including generous donations from Birmingham businesses and the public. Due diligence is carried out on all offers of PPE received.
- 5.1.16. Procurement of further PPE is being undertaken in partnership with regional local authorities to increase our purchasing power.
- 5.1.17. With demand for PPE high and the subsequent pressure on supply chains, prioritisation of how the stock is used is required. Robust processes have been put in place for the allocation and distribution of PPE. This has enabled services that most need PPE to protect citizens and staff to remain equipped throughout the pandemic. The top priority is given to those who are working directly to provide care and support to vulnerable citizens, including our staff working in care centres and those providing domiciliary care.
- 5.1.18. As well as supplying PPE to our staff, there is also a need to support other independent providers who provide critical services to citizens. Systems and arrangements to monitor the PPE stock situation in the independent sector were established, so we are better able to quickly respond when a provider is in difficulty. An on-line portal has been developed for PPE requests and we have developed very effective working arrangements with Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust so that there is a single route for care homes who require support with PPE and other aspects of infection control and safe working practices.
- 5.1.19. PPE stock usage is being reported back to Local Resilience Forums on a weekly basis, in line with their requirements.
- 5.1.20. As the pandemic response evolves, the arrangements for PPE supply and distribution continue to change. The Government has now launched a PPE portal to act as the primary source of emergency supply for the independent care sector. This should reduce demand on the Council's stock although other pressures may emerge as guidance on the use of PPE further develops.

- 5.1.21. As at 17th August 2020, the PPE team has distributed 2,414,672 items of PPE including over 500k face-masks, 640k aprons and over 1m gloves.
- 5.1.22. In terms of PPE distributed to City Council services – 54% of the total has been supplied to Adult Social Care, 19% to Education and Skills and 6% to Neighbourhoods. 15% of the “internal” distribution has been supplied to the Children’s Trust.

Support to care homes

- 5.1.23. Throughout the past six months we have proactively worked with our Health colleagues to provide a strong level of practical and financial support for care homes.
- 5.1.24. Regular contact has been maintained to ensure providers can raise concerns promptly and regular information, advice and guidance is being published on the Council’s website via the ‘Care Service Provider’ page, including FAQs. Where providers are facing staff shortages, support is being provided on a mutual aid basis. Elsewhere, the directorate is coordinating clinical support for care homes, including enhanced GP cover and has expanded the Trusted Assessor model for hospital discharge to reduce the need for providers to conduct their own assessments.
- 5.1.25. The directorate have developed a care home tracker, bringing together several sources of data on care homes. This is being used to identify those homes we believe will benefit from enhanced testing and also to ensure that support is available to care homes once test results are known. Alongside this the CCG have led on developing a highly effective Pillar 1 swabbing process for use in the city.
- 5.1.26. Local enhanced testing arrangements has been used to coordinate whole home testing for all care homes during May and June 2020. We have been providing tests and getting results within 48 hours, and if there is a Covid-19 positive result we have provided swift wrap-around support through providing advice on self-isolation, assistance with staffing and enhanced GP and nursing care.
- 5.1.27. We have been working hard with our local system partners to coordinate a local enhanced testing programme and to ensure that once results are known, we provide advice and support to care providers to help manage outbreaks effectively.
- 5.1.28. Whilst we do have a large number of care providers (291 homes) and residents (7,200), we are confident we can provide a holistic testing and support offer based on local intelligence from across our health and social care system.
- 5.1.29. We have provided a strong level of financial support for care homes, implementing a previously agreed fee increase that reflects inflation and

National Living Wage, as well as reimbursement of additional costs e.g. staffing and PPE, on an open book basis for any additional costs since 16 March 2020.

- 5.1.30. Beyond this we have implemented the ability for up to 25% variance to costs for home support/supported living without recourse to social work review where the change is temporary and as a result of Covid-19 e.g. day service, lunch club closure or simply an increase or decrease of care required. We also released payment of over £1m relating to disputed invoices where risk of potential overpayment was low, to assist with cashflow.

Patient/Staff Testing

- 5.1.31. Testing numbers have continued to increase and a series of new pathways for testing have been activated over the last month nationally, including the launch of weekly staff and monthly resident care home testing.
- 5.1.32. Laboratory capacity across the West Midlands has steadily increased both for patient and staff testing (including postal testing for staff who are unable to drive). There are between 1-2,000 tests a day being carried out in the West Midlands.
- 5.1.33. Testing for Adult Social Care staff has been available via two routes, the government self-referral website for essential workers or via BCC Occupational Health. Both routes have enabled staff and members of their household who are showing symptoms of the virus to request a test. These routes have been embedded within directorate processes to ensure that staffing levels are known, and services can continue, as well as appropriate health and wellbeing support offered to staff.
- 5.1.34. Following the government announcement of antibody tests for social workers on Thursday 21st May, and the subsequent extension of this offer to the entire health and social care workforce, antibody tests are now being conducted with workers and are due to conclude by the end of August.

Supporting our carers

- 5.1.35. Adult Social Care have continued to work with and support our carers since the start of the emergency response to the pandemic. The Carers Strategy Group, which consists of providers and commissioners, has been temporarily reconfigured to meet on a weekly basis to ensure that there is a consistent response across the city for all carers. The Carers Support Service has also been temporarily reconfigured to optimise the support to carers through these challenging times.
- 5.1.36. We continue to provide focused outreach/safe and well checks via telephone targeting the most vulnerable registered carers first. Our webpages are

continually updated to provide the latest Covid-19 advice, guidance and links to government guidance.

- 5.1.37. Work is currently under way to identify the longer-term negative impacts of Covid-19 for carers and how this should be addressed as part of the city's recovery journey. Potential themes identified so far include: the financial impact of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions, isolation, loss of independence, and the risk of deterioration in health for both carers and the people they care for.

Finance

- 5.1.38. As at period 4 (end of July 2020), the overall forecast outturn for the Adults Social Care Directorate is an overspend of £30.000m against the current budget of £328.361m, which is a combination of a Covid-19 related overspend of £31.777m offset by a base budget underspend of £1.777m.

5.2. Public Health

- 5.2.1. Our Public Health Director Dr Justin Varney continues to lead on supporting our response to the Covid-19 challenges.

- 5.2.2. The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing continues to send weekly Public Health briefings to elected members providing a short summary of the current data on Covid-19 in Birmingham. This section of the report provides the latest data as of **31 August 2020**.

- The 7-day case rate up to **31 August 2020** in Birmingham was 26.2 per 100,000.
- Spread appears to be primarily occurring through social interactions within family networks and workplaces where social distancing is not being observed.
- Hospital admissions remain very low and the international evidence suggests that where there are increases, in primarily younger working age adults, there is usually a 4-week time lag before this is reflected in hospitalisations;
- Situations / outbreaks reported to Public Health England have fallen to 25 from 31 in the 7 days leading up to the 23rd August and the majority are linked to workplaces, or to residential care homes.
- There has been consistent increase in the number of people testing positive in the 20-40yr age group and a small increase in both 40-59yrs and 0-19yrs age groups. Further analysis of the 0-19yrs shows this is primarily in the 16-21yrs age group, most visibly in the week ending the 16th August.

- In terms of ethnicity there has been a rise in all ethnic groups testing positive, although the largest ethnic group remains the Asian community.

Awareness Raising

- 5.2.3 The current testing regime is based on testing individuals admitted to hospital and NHS staff (pillar 1) and testing in the community (pillar 2). Community testing includes repeat testing of residents and staff in older adult residential care homes.
- 5.2.4 Currently, the reporting of pillar 2 tests and cases lags behind pillar 1 and there is a 3 day lag in complete data. The Council is receiving daily data on new cases but there is not yet demographic data on testing uptake other than post-code level data.
- 5.2.5 Partnerships have been formed with a series of local community radio stations to actively promote awareness and Covid-19 information, including: Ambur Radio, Switch Radio, Raaj FM, New Style Radio, Big City Radio, and Unity FM.
- 5.2.6 Various other measures are being taken to raise awareness as follows:
- Targeted social media focused to post-code areas with consistent series of household cases is being circulated to community partners and members to help increase awareness.
 - Translated versions of national test and trace posters are being circulated through social media and community partners. This is supported by proactive community engagement.
 - Supporting awareness of Asian Chamber of Commerce multi-lingual helpline to support businesses become Covid-19 safe.
 - Weekly meetings with faith leaders and different community organisations to support messaging and communication cascades.
 - The [Bhealthy campaign](#) has launched with translated materials, including testing and Covid-19 safety advice and is being supported by a series of community webinars.
 - Environmental Health capacity has been increased to support education and awareness engagement with businesses and Inclusive Growth has been working with the BIDs in a similar way.

Testing

- 5.2.7 The Council has worked with DHSC/NHSE to agree additional drive through and walk-through testing sites. These have been chosen based on the physical space requirements but focused on areas where there is lower car ownership for the walk-through sites or lower testing uptake.

- 5.2.8 The national regional and local testing service led by NHS England are working with the Council to scope further temporary and rotational pop-up testing sites.
- 5.2.9 The Council is working with the NHS Test and Trace and Regional DHSC team to develop 'drop and collect', a pilot approach to taking testing kits to the doorstep in areas where there is increased concern or low testing uptake. The drop and collect teams will provide kits to households with information, (translations will be available) and then collect the kits within an agreed time frame, these will then go through the logistics of local testing sites and it is hoped that this will increase participation in testing and also provide citizens with faster access to results.

Contact tracing

- 5.2.10 The Council is already working with West Midlands PHE to provide additional support to contact tracing where individuals have not responded or not engaged fully with CTAS.
- 5.2.11 There are two approaches being developed to support contact tracing processes in Birmingham as part of the national enhanced support approach:
- Increased situation awareness for national contact tracers so that positive cases can be asked specific questions about attendance at events that we know have happened in their potential exposure period such as street parties.
 - Local Authority support for enhanced contact tracing, this is the national model where there is an accelerated approach to contact tracing where those who do not respond within 2-3 days are then moved to Local Authority follow up by trained staff. We are working for this to go live in mid-September.

Covid-19 and ethnicity

- 5.2.12 There are multiple pieces of research that highlight a statistically significant difference in death rates in different ethnic groups. Although the variance between different ethnic groups is reduced when variables such as age, gender and deprivation are considered this does not fully explain the disparity and further research is needed to explore the reasons for this.
- 5.2.13 This pandemic has exposed the links between inequality experienced across race, class, gender, disability and age. Highlighting existing inequalities in terms of low income work, education, health, housing, but has also revealed new divides in terms of the ability to work and learn from home, to access green spaces, the extent of digital and financial exclusion.

- 5.2.14 The impact of this virus will affect many families and individuals but it will have a profound effect upon those who were already experiencing inequalities before the pandemic.
- 5.2.15 The council is already looking at these impacts by collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data and engaging with voluntary and community organisations and partners to help us better understand and support communities. Birmingham has been leading the way on raising these issues and will be participating in a number of national and regional reviews to explore the impact of Covid-19 on our BAME communities.

6 Education, Skills and Children's Wellbeing

6.1 Schools

- 6.1.1 We were pleased to be supported by an experienced inspector from Ofsted who was seconded to Birmingham during the summer term and was a key part of a successful partnership initiative between the City Council and the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. This partnership undertook research which helped to develop our understanding of the short-and medium-term effects of school closures on the learning and wellbeing of pupils, and to support schools identify strategies to support pupils and promote equity.
- 6.1.2 In May, Government set out plans for schools in England to start reopening to more pupils from the start of June. The Council produced a comprehensive risk assessment document to support schools with planning for reopening and committed to working with schools, parents and unions to ensure that any such move was done in a safe way that gave confidence and reassurance. The risk assessment took account of all aspects of government and Public Health guidance and has been regularly updated as the guidance has changed.
- 6.1.3 Birmingham schools began to reopen to more pupils in eligible year groups (nursery, reception, Y1 and Y6) from the start of June and attendance steadily increased. By 22nd June, 26,000 children were attending. On Tuesday 23rd June, 100% of Birmingham primary schools were open, 96% of nursery schools, 94% of secondaries and 89% of special schools.
- 6.1.4 During the summer term, the Council arranged for the delivery of 703 laptops provided by the DfE to maintained schools. These laptops are for the use of disadvantaged pupils in Year 10. A further 3,770 laptops were provided by the DfE for children with a social worker identified by Birmingham Children's Trust.
- 6.1.5 To support families over the summer period, the council developed a menu of potential holiday activities, both online and onsite, with external providers for schools to take up. Schools experiencing high parental demand for extended childcare were supported to access provision with local childcare providers. The

council published details of holiday childcare through playschemes and other activities on its website.

- 6.1.6 All schools in Birmingham have been re-opening to all pupils from the start of September. In advance of the re-opening we supported this by ensuring that strong messages went out across the education sector that stressed the importance of full re-opening. Schools have been offered support with logistics planning and risk assessments.
- 6.1.7 Initial attendance data from the DfE for the very start of term has shown Birmingham compares favourably to other core cities and primary attendance is in line with national average. We will of course be monitoring this closely in the days and weeks to come. Officers from Education and Skills will be continuing their work with schools to support families over the coming weeks and we remain confident that the vast majority of concerns families may have can be resolved when they speak to their children's schools for reassurance.
- 6.1.8 Working with school leaders, trade union colleagues, Public Health and other stakeholders we will be sharing messages with families and the wider community from September onwards. These will emphasise the benefits of returning to school for pupils' wellbeing as well as their outcomes and will reassure families of the comprehensive risk assessments that have been done by schools to ensure children can be welcomed back safely. A variety of channels will be used, including social media.
- 6.1.9 Officers from Education and Skills have continued to work closely with Public Health on Test and Trace. A comprehensive flowchart has been produced to support schools and education settings deal with suspected cases and positive feedback has been received about schools' engagement with the process and their understanding of the reporting protocols. Where suspected cases have arisen in school settings, these have been dealt with appropriately and in full compliance with all Public Health guidance.
- 6.1.10 Comprehensive support has been provided to Birmingham schools to help them plan for the full reopening to all pupils from September 2020. In conjunction with the Council's safety services team, the risk assessment document has been fully updated to include all changes to guidance and preparation for possible future local lockdowns. The Council is receiving completed risk assessments for all schools for which it is the employer of staff (community and voluntary controlled) and providing feedback where appropriate. All schools and academies are required to provide the council with a declaration of conformity that confirms a full risk assessment has been undertaken.
- 6.1.11 As part of the preparation for a full return of pupils in September, the Council has worked up plans to potentially commission the use of public buildings and spaces beyond the school estate for educational purposes if pupils could not all return to the same school building/site. Education officers worked closely with

HR and partners to explore innovative solutions to any potential workforce deficit.

6.1.12 Education and Skills and Transportation colleagues are working closely both locally and regionally on ensuring that public transport can safely support a full return of pupils in September.

6.1.13 The council will continue to support schools and settings by providing regular updates to school leaders, sharing national messages, providing local Public Health information and updating the risk assessment when any new guidance is issued.

6.2 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

SEND Improvement and Transformation Journey

6.2.1 Despite the considerable disruption caused by Covid-19, work has continued at pace on the SEND service improvement and transformation journey. In some areas, progress has actually accelerated as teams have been forced to innovate and develop new solutions to problems posed by the pandemic. Since the last update report in June 2020, key improvement activities have included:

- Establishing weekly meetings with all schools to discuss children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and their return to on-site learning;
- Continuing weekly monitoring of EHCPs for pupils returning in September, across all schools and settings;
- Development of a new School Bridging Service to support and monitor children with anxieties about returning to school;
- Surveying individual pupil wellbeing across schools and the impact of COVID-19 on families (with a final report due in October 2020);
- Supporting our children and young people to present their views on the impact of COVID-19, with a view to feeding this into service development;
- Working alongside Cambridge University on a report looking at SEND provision across six schools in Birmingham.

6.2.2 Further details on some of these activities are provided below.

Supporting our SEND families

6.2.3 The Assistant Director for SEND and the Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing continue to have regular teams meeting with our Parent Carer Forum and this has been very useful in ensuring that the information and advice on our

local offer website and locality working has been relevant to our families with children with SEND.

- 6.2.4 The local offer website continues to be updated to ensure our children and young people with SEND and their families have up to date information and advice on frequently asked questions, tips and links to useful websites and resources.
- 6.2.5 Our specialist advisory teacher services team have been providing a range of advice and ideas to support children and families at home during the past 6 months.

Special Schools

- 6.2.6 Throughout the pandemic, the service has worked with our 27 Special Schools to ensure that students, parents and carers remain supported. For those schools that stayed open, this included weekly meetings with the Assistant Director for SEND and the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture.
- 6.2.7 We have worked closely with head teachers over the last two academic terms to provide guidance and advice, as well as ensure the supply of the necessary equipment to keep children and staff safe in Special Schools.
- 6.2.8 Prior to the summer break, the Council directly supplied PPE to Special Schools through our corporate procurement function. This direct distribution of equipment was in contrast to other local authorities, who did not supply PPE to schools beyond initial emergency supplies when schools reopened towards the end of term.
- 6.2.9 Due to the significant costs of directly supplying PPE to Special Schools, institutions were asked to make individual arrangements for the procurement of PPE supplies in the new academic year. However, following discussions with Special Schools and concerns about the financial burden this would place on schools, the Council has now agreed to continue directly distributing PPE to schools until at least the Autumn half-term.

Transition back to school

- 6.2.10 Since the last report to City Council in June 2020, the service has been busy planning for the new academic year and how we might best support children's transition back into school and on-site learning. Whether pupils are returning to familiar settings or starting at a new school, we recognise that the beginning of this academic year will look very different to what children and their families might normally expect.
- 6.2.11 We understand that many parents and carers are anxious about their children returning to school, especially if their child has complex care needs. Where there is a concern, schools have proactively worked with families to carry out

individual pupil risk assessments focusing on reducing risk and enabling a return to on-site learning.

- 6.2.12 The Educational Psychology Service has produced several resources to assist with the transition back into school, including both guidance for parents and easy-to-understand stories for children. This includes:
- 'Parent Guide: Practical tools, tips and resources for returning to school'
 - 'I'm Going Back To School' story
 - 'Supporting the return to school: Encouraging flexible thinking for children with Autism Spectrum Condition'
- 6.2.13 More broadly, the SEND service is in the process of developing a city-wide graduated approach to addressing pupil wellbeing, based on a four stage 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle. To facilitate this, we are looking to appoint wellbeing leads from across school leadership teams as well as a dedicated practitioner in each school. Over the coming months, we will be working within locality school teams to assist with capacity building and enable them to be more effective in their roles.
- 6.2.14 The Council has created a new Home Bridging Team to support children and young people who are anxious about returning to school. This term, out of 83 children who were previously home tutored, the team have successfully supported 64 children in gaining a place back in school. Moving forward into the Autumn Term, the team will be working within localities to establish local support offers for all key stages.

Education Health and Care Plans

- 6.2.15 Over this period, we are working hard to keep the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) process moving. The service continues to operate via telephone calls and video conferencing where possible, and decision-making panels have successfully moved online. Previous improvement work on structured pathways has resulted in significant efficiencies within the system, with the average wait for plans reducing to its lowest for some years.
- 6.2.16 Parent Link Officers continue to work alongside all agencies across the SEND landscape to seek resolutions to issues and improve outcomes for children and young people. The majority of referrals received are related to requests for assessment, school placements, communication breakdowns, and general requests for advice and guidance.

Temporary Legislative Changes

- 6.2.17 On 1st May 2020, as part of the legislative response to Covid-19, national government announced changes to the legislation around Education, Health and

Care Plans (EHCPs). These temporary changes last until 25th September, and give local authorities, health commissioning bodies, education providers and other agencies more flexibility around statutory timelines for EHC assessments and plans to allow for the disruption caused by the pandemic.

6.2.18 No changes have been made to Annual Reviews, appeals processes or the admission of children to schools.

Home to School Transport

6.2.19 Birmingham City Council currently conveys over 4200 children to SEND schools and resource centres, which presents a major challenge in the context of Covid-19 social distancing guidance and risk assessments.

6.2.20 Despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic, we are planning for a full return of all pupils to schools in accordance with DfE guidance. Schools are planning a phased approach to pupil return in the first three weeks of September, with 98% of schools working to a full return of all students by the end of September. Plans are in place for class, Key Stage and corridor 'bubbles', with staggered lunch and break times. A small number of schools plan to work as one bubble. In relation to bubbles the following work has been undertaken:-

- Over the summer break, we have undertaken a comprehensive programme of planning and risk assessments for the new academic year. Key activities include:
- Consultation with all schools concerning new admissions and how bubbles will operate;
- Working with travel operators to plan new routes that meet bubble requirements while minimising change for each young person;
- Issuing of guidance to travel operators, parents and schools on new routes and timetables;
- Weekly meetings with representatives from Travel Assist to discuss individual school requirements in detail;
- Follow-up meetings with SEND Parent Link Officers and Travel Assist representatives offered to all schools in the last week of the summer break, to ensure that plans were up-to-date and sufficiently robust;
- Issuing of all necessary PPE to Travel Assist guides.

6.2.21 These changes to the Home to School Transport service, including the operation of new routes and services, have necessitated the procurement of additional vehicles and the recruitment of additional Travel Assist guides. The financial impact of these changes is currently being calculated.

6.3 Birmingham Children's Trust

Contact

- 6.3.1 Despite the limitations placed on services by the pandemic and social distancing guidance, Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) remains in regular contact with all children and young people open to them. The number of face-to-face visits and meetings continues to increase, with comprehensive risk assessment processes in place. All front-line staff are provided with PPE, and individual staff assessments have been introduced to ensure that the workforce feels safe and protected.
- 6.3.2 BCT continues to offer extra support to children, families and young people where there are additional risk factors. They continue to collect and report live data on the frequency and methodology of visits, with this information made available to all members of the BCT leadership team.
- 6.3.3 The Council meets weekly with BCT and other partners, including police and health, to discuss children whom BCT believes should be attending educational settings. Partner agencies are making direct contact with families to ensure the safe return to school for children where possible.
- 6.3.4 We continue to emphasize the importance of case progression and oversight as opposed to 'contact' with children, young people and their families. Webinars have been held on the importance of safety planning during Covid-19, case progression and maintaining contact with children. We are encouraged that BCT is getting closer to resuming 'business as usual'.

Practice

- 6.3.5 From 30th June, BCT has reintroduced family time (contact) for children in care. Updated guidance, practice standards, and risk assessments have been published, and all stakeholders consulted. There are plans to open a second contact centre.
- 6.3.6 The Local Family Justice Board has introduced a hybrid approach to care hearings in line with recent guidance, and this process is now well established.
- 6.3.7 From 1st July 2020, practice evaluations have been reintroduced for BCT staff.
- 6.3.8 BCT continues to support staff to work remotely, with a range of different measures in place to ensure team cohesion and staff wellbeing. A daily communications update is sent to all BCT staff so that everyone is kept up-to-date with recent news and developments, and regular staff forums are held to so that the needs and concerns of staff can be understood and responded to appropriately. A new suite of e-learning training has been developed to support staff to work from home and maintain wellbeing. A staff survey has been

undertaken and early findings suggest high levels of satisfaction with current arrangements.

- 6.3.9 Despite the success of these staff support measures, BCT is negotiating the use of some buildings to enable staff to continue to work effectively in the longer-term.
- 6.3.10 Throughout the crisis, BCT has maintained high levels of performance and 100% of performance indicators have remained within tolerance. They continue to hold virtual meetings, reviews, conferences and visits and have ensured that families have access to ICT equipment so that close contact can be maintained.
- 6.3.11 As part of the recovery, BCT is now working with the wider partnership to consider the learning from Covid-19 and ask how they can maintain the pace of change that has been seen in strategic and operational partnership working during the crisis.

Finance

- 6.3.12 BCT has responded well to Covid-19 challenges within the overall context of a difficult financial situation for public sector finances. The Trust has acted to reduce and suppress Covid-19 spending where it can, leading to the reduction of the initial estimate of financial impact by half.
- 6.3.13 The costs relating to Covid-19 committed by the Trust amount to approximately £1.9m to date. The estimate of costs up to the end of September is in the range of £3-3.5m and relates primarily to contingent accommodation. This is being reviewed as the period of restrictions continues to ensure both short term sufficiency and that costs are reasonable.
- 6.3.14 The Trust has not incurred significant additional staffing costs as the workforce has been resilient in terms of sickness levels and staff redeployment.

Challenges

- 6.3.15 Throughout the crisis Birmingham Children's Trust has faced significant challenges in continuing to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families across the city. As we head into autumn, BCT continues to face difficulties caused by social distancing guidance as well as new issues posed by the lifting of lockdown restrictions and the reopening of educational settings.
- 6.3.16 Following the lifting of lockdown restrictions, there has been a steady increase in contacts and referrals to the Trust, with referral numbers almost back to the usual expected rate. While this is good news, with the reopening of schools there is a risk of a higher than normal 'spike' in referrals and contacts which could place considerable strain on services.

- 6.3.17 BCT is working hard with colleagues from the Council, partners and families to support all vulnerable children back into school in the autumn term. However, the Trust has a limited influence on the individual decisions that families make for their children, and the final numbers of children returning to school will not be known until some way into the term.
- 6.3.18 The suspension of court hearings during lockdown, and the move to online proceedings, has caused significant delays to court work and the progression of some cases. BCT is in talks with the judiciary about how best to handle delays and the impact on children's wellbeing, and detailed plans are now in place to prioritise both outstanding and new court work.
- 6.3.19 BCT is aware of the need to support staff to sustain new ways of working, both to ensure the stability of the workforce and to secure the safety and wellbeing of children and families known to the Trust. In addition to the mental health impacts of lockdown and long-term working from home, 60% of the workforce are from BAME communities and may require additional support to feel safe and protected while delivering services. To help tackle some of these issues, the Director of Public Health has facilitated sessions on Covid-19 with the BCT workforce, answering questions and offering advice and guidance. A secondment opportunity has been offered out to staff, to create a new role with a dedicated focus on BAME issues and improvement within BCT.
- 6.3.20 Continuing high levels of uncertainty, and the risk of a 'second wave' of Covid-19 infections, pose additional risks to service delivery and sustainability. BCT continues to review the service response, including lessons learned from the lockdown period, to ensure that the Trust is ready for any future waves of infection or local lockdowns.

6.4 Youth Service

- 6.4.1 In line with government guidance, all Birmingham City Council youth centres closed at the beginning of the lockdown period, with no youth services physically operating from buildings. Instead, we have adapted our service model to offer support to young people online and over the telephone, with youth workers providing advice, guidance and emotional support around issues of social isolation, anxiety and stress. All our youth centres have maintained an active online presence to deliver youth work virtually – keeping young people updated and sharing information, setting regular health and wellbeing challenges, and delivering virtual youth work sessions.
- 6.4.2 Support to young people around their future pathways and reassurance regarding returning to school has also been an important part of the support offered. Workers have delivered care packages, activity packs and food parcels to vulnerable young people and families. Regular doorstep checks with young people have also taken place.

- 6.4.3 The Youth service are currently delivering 33 detached youth work sessions a week across the City in the local communities and parks. The main messages to young people have been around keeping safe and options for their future. Detached work has also responded to West Midlands Police request regarding ASB and youth violence.
- 6.4.4 The Youth Service has been following the National Youth Agencies Readiness guidelines regarding delivery and are currently preparing centres for re-opening. Work with individuals and small groups will commence shortly from our centres.

6.5 Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES)

- 6.5.1 Following Government advice, all Adult Education centres were closed to the public on Friday 20th March 2020, shifting to the online provision of courses and learner support services.
- 6.5.2 Throughout the lockdown we have continued to monitor the impact on learner recruitment and attendance and are pleased to report that we achieved the highest number of online courses/enrolments in England in the adult skills sector. Since April 2020, we had 5574 learners enrolling on courses, of whom 1169 are ESOL learners and 1943 are learners enrolled in English, Maths or IT.
- 6.5.3 Between April and July 2020, we offered 714 new online courses in response to COVID-19. We offered courses in Health and Social Care, English, Maths, ICT, and Business, Family Learning and Languages. In April 2020 we launched our digital Community Hub in our website with more than 1300 visits. We continued to offer support and guidance to learners online, through the BAES website, social media and videoconferencing/video-calling software. During this period our Progress Coaches had 2055 interactions with learners to support them with their learning online.
- 6.5.4 BAES has redeveloped the 2020/21 offer to produce a 'recovery curriculum' in response to the economic recession and increasing rates of unemployment, with further focus on skills and employability programmes, including introduction of the 'route to work' plan and progression pathways into further skills training and jobs. A significantly increased proportion of the offer is also available for online learning to increase flexibility in accessing training for learners and employers. BAES is also providing workforce development for those in entry level jobs for SMEs as part of strategy to maximising job retention and career development for those most at risk.
- 6.5.5 BTIS has been quick to adapt face to face interpreting provision since the introduction of social distancing measures. Audio conferencing interpreting via Microsoft teams has been put into practice ensuring continuity of service delivery and clients being able to work with their usual interpreters. BSL interpreting is being provided by video via Teams and WhatsApp.

6.5.6 Translation provision also continues. Since April we have completed the translation of COVID-19 key messages for BCC and neighbouring local authorities. We have also translated information posters, provided audio recordings of Test and Trace scripts and translated and recorded a radio message. Languages have included Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Kurdish, Mirpuri, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Pushto, Romanian, Russian, Somali, Tigrinya and Urdu.

6.6 Birmingham Careers Service

6.6.1 Careers Service staff have continued to deliver services on a virtual and agile basis throughout the duration of the lockdown, offering careers information advice and guidance services to NEET (aged 16-19), young people at risk of becoming NEET, and some young people who attend schools for the service trades. We have also offered a generic exam results service to advise young people on their options following GCSEs and A-Levels.

6.6.2 Our work has focused on developing and consolidating existing provision to ensure that young people continue to be supported throughout the crisis. Where possible, support services have been moved to virtual/online delivery, with careers advice and guidance provided to NEET young people and students via phone, email, WhatsApp, text, and social media.

6.6.3 Young people have been kept informed about local provision over the summer months, including college and training provider recruitment and enrolment, apprenticeships, volunteering opportunities and study programmes. This has taken place via the above-mentioned methods plus the introduction of webinars, webchat, and the increased use of twitter, Instagram and Facebook posts.

6.6.4 The service has maintained contact with all schools, encouraging the referral of all Year 11, 12 and 13 pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET. This has led to over 500 referrals within a month with potentially more to follow as results become known. The service is aware that the availability of some offers of employment, education, training or learning that were promised to young people may no longer be available due to the current situation, so we are prepared to support those young people to identify alternative options and routes towards education and employment.

6.6.5 A range of new online resources have also been produced including:

- exam results newsletters;
- Enrolment 2020 information;
- a directory of support services for young people;
- and, virtual tours from a range of training providers.

6.6.6 Further information on the above and details on how to access services are now available on the website at <https://www.birminghamcareersservice.co.uk>

6.7 Libraries

6.7.1 All Birmingham library buildings were closed to the public from Monday 23rd March following Government advice. However, this does not mean that the library service itself was closed – instead, we saw a 111% rise in online demand for library membership over the lockdown period, and library staff have been busy over the summer creating new online services and innovations designed to increase access to services.

6.7.2 New services provided by the library service include the following:

- ‘Virtual library’ website
- Children’s “Story Time” twice weekly (via YouTube)
- “Rhyme Time” twice weekly (via YouTube)
- Poetry sessions
- Book review sessions
- Book collections provided to homeless in hostels and hotels
- Access to newspapers from across the world covering 100 countries in 60 languages
- Addition of 1500 comics and graphic novels to website

6.7.3 Since lockdown, over 6,266 eBooks and 2,569 e-audio books have been loaned out to citizens.

6.7.4 The archive and collections team continue to explore options to ensure that people’s experiences of the pandemic in Birmingham are documented, recorded and added to the city’s collective memory in the Library of Birmingham’s archives. A blog went live on 11th May asking citizens to record their experiences and collect material for addition to the city’s archive.

6.7.5 Since 5th August, the library service has begun to implement its re-opening strategy with an Order and Collect Service for books at locations across the city where it has been deemed safe to open. 23 community libraries across the city and Library of Birmingham are currently offering an Order and Collect Service and this will increase over the coming weeks.

7 Communities (including Housing and Bereavement Services)

7.1 Housing

Homelessness and rough sleeping

- 7.1.1 The City Council and its partners continue to provide support to rough sleepers and homeless families following the easing of lockdown restrictions.
- 7.1.2 Rough sleeping numbers remain steady in the range 20-30, all of whom have been offered accommodation. There has been a geographical shift of rough sleeps out of the city centre, though this has seen some reversal as the city centre becomes a little busier. Operational plans are in place should there be a 'second wave' or a local lockdown.
- 7.1.3 The official rough sleeper count night for 2020 will take place in November.
- 7.1.4 We have bid for funding for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). The programme and fund have been created to ensure that as few individuals as possible return to rough sleeping following the Covid-19 lockdown which saw nearly 15,000 people brought into temporary accommodation across the country. If our bid is successful, the programme will provide short-term accommodation and immediate support for former rough sleepers, alongside longer-term move-on accommodation and funding for drug and alcohol treatment.
- 7.1.5 We are currently providing accommodation and subsistence to approximately 80 individuals deemed 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NPRF) in hotels, temporary accommodation, and supported housing. Recent discussions have confirmed the desire to continue to protect and support these individuals on a three-month rolling basis, subject to individual review and monthly public health review. Additional legal advice is now being sought on the impact of 'suspension of derogation of duties' regarding EEA nationals.
- 7.1.6 Since lockdown over 800 individuals have been seen by the housing advice service, provided by the Housing Options Centre at Washington Court and Sifa Fireside.
- 7.1.7 The number of referrals coming through the Housing Options Centre via phone remains steady at around 220 -240 per week, which is around the same as before lockdown. The majority of cases tend to be due to relationship breakdowns. We may see an increase in referrals to the service as the evictions ban for those in Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation comes to an end on 20th September. More on this is provided below.
- 7.1.8 We have seen an increase in demand for temporary accommodation from mid-June onwards, with numbers in Bed & Breakfast accommodation (B&Bs) rising to around 500.

- 7.1.9 There is still a shortage of self-contained and longer term accommodation due to the effects of COVID-19 on our contractors, who have taken longer than expected to resume business as usual. This is being closely monitored.
- 7.1.10 For the safety of customers and staff, we have reviewed and adapted our processes for allocating properties to ensure that the risk of spread of coronavirus is reduced as far as possible. For example, whenever possible, viewings are being completed virtually. We have also asked registered providers to do the same.
- 7.1.11 Domestic Abuse and Youth Hubs are open and carrying out interviews; however the majority are completed, where possible, by telephone.
- 7.1.12 Homeless prevention visits have recommenced whilst observing the social distancing guidelines. A sufficient supply of PPE equipment has been sourced.

National ban on evictions

- 7.1.13 On 21st August, national government announced that it would be extending the national ban on evictions for renters to 20th September. Prior to this announcement there was widespread concern that the lifting of the ban would lead to a surge in homelessness, prompting Birmingham City Council to write to national government urging them to take action and provide financial assistance to support renters and landlords.
- 7.1.14 While we welcome the extension of the national ban on evictions for renters, there is concern that additional support is needed for both renters and landlords. The Council is lobbying national government to develop and fund a temporary Rent Support Scheme for those who have accrued rent arrears during the Covid-19 lockdown, aimed at households who have either lost jobs or have been furloughed on low incomes.
- 7.1.15 The Council continues to strongly urge all its own tenants who have financial concerns or are struggling to pay their bills to contact the Council directly. As a landlord to over 60,000 households, we have seen rent arrears increase by almost £4.5m since lockdown first began. In response, the Council has proactively contacted more than 18,000 tenants to try and understand what further support is needed to prevent them from falling any further into debt.
- 7.1.16 Help and support is available to all residents in Birmingham. If tenants can afford to pay their rent, we strongly encourage them to make this a priority so that, when the ban is lifted on 20th September, they don't find themselves in a situation which might have been avoidable.
- 7.1.17 The Council is also asking private landlords to act sympathetically and sensitively and support their tenants who are struggling at this difficult time, to prevent evictions in the future.

7.1.18 We will continue to work with national organisations and other local authorities across the UK to ensure a consistent and reliable approach once the ban is lifted.

Housing repairs and maintenance

7.1.19 Since Government lifted Covid-19 restrictions on 15th June 2020, we have started to release and complete routine repairs in customers' homes, while maintaining social distancing and safe working practices. Due to the continuing disruption caused by the pandemic, we have made some small changes to the process and are allowing contractors 40 days to carry out these non-urgent repairs. Some supply issues are being experienced but contractors are making efforts to deal with this challenge. Contractors are working hard to complete the jobs that have been raised over the last four months, and it is anticipated the full service will return to business as usual in September.

7.1.20 We are pleased to update that the backlog in gas servicing is reducing as officers work hard to contact customers to book appointments and carry out works.

Housing management

7.1.21 As lockdown measures are relaxed, we are working to return our housing management services to normal functioning. Following the sign-off of risk assessments, we pleased to provide the following updates:

- Visiting services have recommenced, currently focusing on cases relating to gardens/issues external to the dwelling and potential abandonments.
- Night-time security patrols, which continued throughout the pandemic, will now return to a more proactive approach when visiting designated blocks and areas.
- Estates-based staff are preparing to recommence normal duties after focusing on only business critical tasks during lockdown. Provision is still in place for staff to start and finish earlier in the day, both to assist with social distancing and reduce contact with residents.
- Subject to agreed risk assessments, we are increasing officer presence at sheltered schemes utilising the offices at these sites.

7.1.22 Following the successful roll-out of virtual viewings during lockdown, this service will continue alongside the reopening of both of our Lettings Suites (subject to agreed risk assessments).

7.1.23 We have also recommenced undertaking mutual exchanges.

7.1.24 We are continuing to see an increase in complaints and issues relating to exempt accommodation. Local virtual meetings have been arranged in a number of wards to deal with these issues, and additional officer resource is being redeployed to focus on this sector, looking to work with providers to raise standards and deal with problems as they arise.

Housing Development/Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT)

7.1.25 Following the lifting of lockdown restrictions, contractors resumed activity on all Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) in June 2020, with Covid-19 safe working protocols in place. Contractors are currently operating at 70-80% efficiency against pre-pandemic activity, resulting in some forecast slippage against the BMHT 2020/21 budget.

7.1.26 As the country slowly returns to 'business as usual', we anticipate further programme delays arising from disruption to the industry, supply chains and international borders. This is likely to lead to significant delays in the delivery of new homes, both for BHMT and sector-wide, regionally and nationally. Programme forecasts have been updated in light of this disruption, and a reduction in delivery for this financial year is inevitable.

7.1.27 Developers have started to raise some concerns around the availability and supply of some materials, and we continue to work closely with partners to monitor and assess the potential risk to the programme in terms of delays and cost increases.

7.1.28 It is important for the city's economic recovery and the financial health of the construction industry in Birmingham that we support contractors through this period of Covid-19 disruption and allow for some degree of flexibility in programme and contract management.

7.1.29 Activity to identify and investigate potential sites for development is continuing, so that the programme can continue at pace once the crisis has passed. We have pushed forward with tender evaluations and acceptance reports to ensure that we can 'hit the ground running' on the other side of the crisis. At the July 2020 Cabinet, development plans for the construction of 234 homes on the Bromford estate gained approval.

7.1.30 We have a number of new developments due to start on site in the autumn, notably the Farnbrough Road site in Castle Vale which will commence in October 2020. This is a joint scheme with Pioneer to deliver 124 new homes for the area.

7.2 Registry Office and Bereavement Services

7.2.1 Following new legislation and social distancing requirements, new arrangements have been made to allow face-to-face registrations to recommence. From 8th

August onwards, all citizens accessing the Registry Office must wear a face covering unless they have a valid exemption under the legislation.

Birth registrations

- 7.2.2 Following the reinstatement of birth registrations with effect from 1st June 2020, a fully operational service is now up and running.
- 7.2.3 When the service reopened, there was a backlog of approximately 6,000 births waiting to be registered. As of 14th August, there are just under 4,500 applications in the system. Recovery arrangements are in place to both reduce the backlog and register new births, but prioritisation of registrations is generally in chronological order with some urgent circumstances taken into consideration e.g. need for passport registration.

Citizenship ceremonies

- 7.2.4 Between March and July 2020, all citizenship ceremonies were cancelled in line with national guidance. The Birmingham Registration Service is now approaching all applicants who were registered for a citizenship ceremony during this period and rearranging bookings.
- 7.2.5 As soon as this backlog is cleared, arrangements for new applicants will be clarified.

Marriage/Civil Partnerships

- 7.2.6 In line with national guidance, marriage and civil partnership ceremonies recommenced from 4th July 2020. Notices of Marriage and Civil Partnership can now be arranged through the Registry Office, with the service operating by appointment.
- 7.2.7 Risk assessments are in place to allow for ceremonies to be held at the Registry Office. The maximum number of participants in weddings is currently 30, including photographers, ministers, and registrars.
- 7.2.8 Registrar General Licence requests for marriage and civil partnerships are being risk assessed and considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with PHE guidance. At all times staff safety is paramount.
- 7.2.9 Applications to reduce the waiting period for marriages or civil partnerships are not being processed. Any applications received or in progress at lockdown have been refunded.
- 7.2.10 Approved premise licences cannot be issued during this period. However, Birmingham City Council's Registrar Service is considering extensions to existing licences where appropriate.

Deaths/Still-Births

- 7.2.11 The Coronavirus Act 2020 made significant changes to the death registration process, with electronic and telephone registration permissible for the first time.
- 7.2.12 Despite increase demand for registrations, legislative and operational changes increased service efficiency overall. These improvements, alongside the allocation of additional staff resources, has reduced the average waiting time for registrations and this is now down to less than 12 hours for completed applications.

Bereavement Services (Burials and Cremations)

- 7.2.13 Despite the lifting of some lockdown restrictions, the Council continues to operate on an emergency footing. This, alongside national restrictions on funeral attendance, has meant some changes to the way that funeral services are conducted.
- 7.2.14 From 1st June onwards, attendance at funerals has been limited to 30 people. This is currently being reviewed following the guidance received concerned re-opening places of worship. Funeral directors have been asked to assist with enforcing rules about attendance and social distancing.
- 7.2.15 Services generally last a maximum of 30 minutes. There is now a requirement for persons attending funerals inside crematoria chapels to wear face coverings, unless an exemption is in place. Ministers must wear face coverings going into and leaving the building, while funeral director staff are also encouraged to wear face coverings.
- 7.2.16 All attendees at burials are also encouraged to wear face coverings.
- 7.2.17 At the height of the pandemic, the number of slots for funerals was increased to cope with an anticipated high level of demand. From August onwards, we have started to review and reduce the number of slots available on a weekly basis, as only 35-40% of slots were being used. In the case of a rise in deaths, the number of slots will again be increased.

7.3 Community Centres

- 7.3.1 Following a Government announcement on 20th March 2020, all Council-managed community centres were closed to the public. A few remained open on a restricted basis during lockdown to accommodate essential community services such as food banks, including the Council-funded TAWS/FareShare operation at Ladywood Health & Community Centre.
- 7.3.2 From 4th July onwards, restrictions were lifted and community centres allowed to reopen. To facilitate the reopening of centres to the public, the Council reviewed operating procedures and carried out new Covid-19 risk assessments to ensure the safety of both citizens and staff.

7.3.3 Council-run community centres started welcoming groups back from 17th August, with a restricted offer initially due to:

- Social distancing requirements which have significantly reduced the capacity of rooms and halls
- Restrictions on some high-risk activities e.g. group singing
- Ventilation requirements which mean we cannot use many of our spaces at present - only those with natural ventilation i.e. opening doors and windows

7.3.4 The return of groups on site will also be phased with tenants, key holders and more regular user groups returning first and it is not anticipated that centres will be operating at pre Covid-19 capacity for some time to come.

7.4 Voluntary Sector Recovery

7.4.1 In June 2020, Birmingham City Council commissioned a report to understand how community organisations mobilised during the COVID-19 crisis. Research was undertaken with a number of small and medium-sized community organisations and key stakeholders across Birmingham.

7.4.2 The report will help us to:

- understand relationship changes between community organisations and BCC brought about by the crisis
- explore how lessons from this crisis can support greater impact of the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper across BCC's working practices
- and, identify the role community organisations can play in city-wide recovery, in tandem with relevant agendas such as inclusive growth.

7.4.3 Many of these organisations worked with and coordinated mutual aid efforts across the city during the pandemic, often operating at a street level, to support their immediate neighbours, especially those 'shielding' from Covid-19. Community organisations played a role in coordinating this support at a larger, cross-city scale.

7.4.4 One of the key drivers of the community response to the Covid-19 crisis has been the deep local intelligence and relationships that community organisations have built up with their communities over time. This knowledge is both unique and irreplaceable, becoming vitally important in times of crisis.

7.4.5 We will use this learning to shape the new future of our relationship with communities going forward.

7.5 Community Safety/Inclusion

- 7.5.1 Since the last report to City Council in June 2020, the Birmingham City Council Community Safety (BCC CSP) and Prevent Team have continued to work in full business continuity mode, working remotely and ensuring as much business as usual activity is continued whilst supporting BCC's organisational response to Covid-19.
- 7.5.2 A transition plan is now in place, enabling the team to draw upon the learning from working practices under lock down and take these lessons into the "new normal".
- 7.5.3 Officers have continued to engage and work collaboratively with all partners to ensure safety in our communities. This ranges from pre-planning and monitoring arrangements in response to the recent protests in the city, to supporting West Midlands Police and other enforcement partners to manage more complex incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- 7.5.4 The Community Safety Partnership Board continues to work collaboratively with other statutory partnerships across the city - including the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children Safeguarding Partnership, and the Adult Safeguarding Board - to reduce duplication and identify any gaps in service provision.
- 7.5.5 Since April 2020, the CSP team have seen a 30% increase in the number of enquiries received, compared to the same time last year.
- 7.5.6 The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) adopted a Gold/Silver/Bronze operating model during the pandemic. This arrangement is now being reviewed as part of the transition plan.

Gold – Executive Board

- 7.5.7 The Executive Board acts as the Gold strategic lead and continues to meet fortnightly. A delivery and communication plan is in place and the Board is working with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Police to support activities around organised crime groups and respond to any increase in tensions as communities transition back into a more normal life. This includes the opening of retail businesses, larger groups of people gathering in parks and more people making use of public transport. A daily partnership tension monitoring process is in place to facilitate this work.

Silver - Operations Group (now Community Safety Operational Group)

- 7.5.8 The Silver Operations Group, has now transitioned into the CSP Operations Group and is working to a new Terms of Reference. The group continues to meet twice a week and will continue to meet virtually with a view to meeting weekly in the longer term.

7.5.9 The CSP Operations Group identifies and manages anti-social behaviour, crime and community tension issues. This includes partnership working to address the following issues:

- Enforcement in relation to Covid-19 related and general incidents of anti-social behaviour. This includes working with partners outside BCSP structures to enable the early identification and rapid resolution of problems.
- Developing stronger links with Safer Travel and British Transport Police to monitor safety issues on public transport
- Providing support in response to increased incidents and tension around parks, including working with the Youth Service to support the increase of youth provision.
- Addressing the increase in unlicensed/pop up parties and raves within streets, homes and parks, by developing a clear process for engagement and enforcement that utilises all the powers available to the Council, West Midlands Police and other partners.
- In addition, the Community Safety Youth Focus Group continues to meet weekly with partners, sharing information with regards to supporting young people and working in partnership to reduce youth crime.

Bronze – Local Partnership Delivery Groups (LPDG)

7.5.10 Under the transition plan the LPDGs are undergoing a review. Five of the six LPDGs have moved to meeting monthly, whilst the City Centre LPDG continues to meet on a fortnightly basis. All six LPDGs continue to have a Place and People based focus.

7.5.11 A number of new relationships with community groups and individuals have developed in lockdown and the BCC CSP team want to ensure these continue moving forward. A community reference group is therefore being developed to:

- increase awareness, trust and confidence in Birmingham's Community Safety delivery.
- support and identify issues and concerns;
- provide opportunity for community members to engage and advise on delivery;
- and, help shape delivery.

7.5.12 Work is also underway on the refreshing and renewal of the city's Hate Crime Strategy, in close collaboration with partners and stakeholders from across the city.

7.6 Prevent

- 7.6.1 The Birmingham City Council’s Channel Panel has continued to work closely with the WM CTU to ensure that multi-agency arrangements are maintained for vulnerable individuals throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Channel Panel meetings have been held virtually on a monthly basis with minimal impact to processes although referrals are down due to lockdown.
- 7.6.2 The Prevent team have continued to work closely with the Home Office and civil society organisations, ensuring any disruption to project delivery has been minimised. Civil society organisations have now moved activities onto online platforms where face to face delivery has not been possible.

7.7 Domestic Abuse

- 7.7.1 Birmingham City Council has worked closely with Birmingham and Solihull Women’s Aid (BSWAID) to widen available support for those at risk of domestic abuse.
- 7.7.2 The importance of staying home to help stop the spread of Covid-19 also meant those suffering domestic abuse were, as a result of the lockdown, spending more time with their perpetrators – with fewer opportunities to seek help.
- 7.7.3 No additional calls were received during early lockdown. However, there has been a significant increase in calls to WM Police between May – August 2020:

Month	2019	2020
May	2411	2738
June	2432	2586
July	2590	2528
August	1420	1506/08/20)

- 7.7.4 To deal with this rise in demand, BSWAID extended its helpline’s opening hours, covering weekends and bank holidays, to ensure that those seeking help had maximum opportunities to do so. For those unable to speak safely to operators, the charity also piloted a local webchat service through www.bswaid.org, where victims were able to use a confidential web chat between 10am and 2pm initially on weekdays. This service has now been extended to 4pm.
- 7.7.5 Furthermore, the Domestic Abuse Hub – which the City Council opened in partnership with BSWAID in March 2019 – remains open to those who are at risk of being made homeless as a result of domestic abuse.
- 7.7.6 The Shadow Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership Board is chaired by Cllr Nicky Brennan in her role as Cabinet Advisor on Domestic Abuse and

Councillor John Cotton, the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety & Equalities, is also a member of the Board.

- 7.7.7 The Board has been set up in preparation of the strategic oversight requirements of local authorities as per the planned implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act. It has been meeting on a fortnightly basis since March. As well as overseeing the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy, the Board is currently focused upon preparing and communicating the City's response to the anticipated increase in reports of domestic abuse as lockdown measures begin to ease. It is also coordinating support efforts from partners should a further local lockdown prove to be required. This includes a parallel media campaign with the hashtag #NoExcuseforabuse.
- 7.7.8 Work has commenced internally to ensure that the Council has robust arrangements in place to support our own staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse and provide a strong message that domestic abuse will not be tolerated in the Council. Council Wide Teams Live events are planned for the autumn which will be led by the Chief Executive and Assistant Director for Human Resources.

7.8 Migration

- 7.8.1 The asylum accommodation system nationally continues to be under huge pressure, initially from the number of in-country applications made by previously failed asylum seekers, and more recently by the high volume of asylum claims made at port following Channel crossings. At the same time, through-put has been paused as those whose claims have been concluded have not been moving out of Home Office accommodation. The lead-in period to resuming move-on from asylum accommodation for those with a positive decision began on 11th August and is being managed by Adult Social Care Commissioning in close partnership with colleagues from Housing, commissioned provider Refugee & Migrant Centre, the Home Office and Serco.
- 7.8.2 A further contingency hotel was opened in the city by Home Office provider Serco in late May, at over 200 bed spaces without initial consultation with the Council. Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG, West Midlands Police, Community Safety, Public Health, ASC Safeguarding and ASC Commissioning are working in concert to ensure that vulnerable people accommodated in this and other sites around the city receive the help and support they need and that robust safeguarding measures are put in place. This rightly reflects the commitments the Council has given as a signatory to the City of Sanctuary declaration.
- 7.8.3 In May 2020, a group of 15 Health Champions from migrant communities in Birmingham were trained as part of Adult Social Care's Migration Friendly Cities initiative to deliver public health messages including Covid-19 information, awareness-raising and signposting in migrant communities and across a range

of languages. The migrant Health Champions will be participating in BCC Public Health's BHealthy campaign, including attending the webinar series in September.

8 Street Scene & Parks

8.1 Waste Collections

Household waste and recycling collections

- 8.1.1 Household waste and recycling collections are being carried out as scheduled. All crews are out collecting as normal and only combining garden waste with residual waste as a last resort, to limit the number of dropped collections. As at 14th August the total number of roads that remain 'dropped' across the whole city is 25 out of a total of 12,250 collected in any given week.
- 8.1.2 Birmingham Refuse Collection workers are still bucking the national trend, and garden waste is still being collected.
- 8.1.3 Following the reopening of renewals for the Garden Subscription Service, a further 3861 sales were made. The Garden Waste Subscription Service has however now closed.
- 8.1.4 Anyone who has had Covid-19 or has displayed symptoms is reminded to follow government guidance to tie and double-bag their waste, and wait 72 hours before disposing of it in their household bin.

Bulky Waste Collections

- 8.1.5 Bookings for bulky waste collections are now being accepted and these will serve as an alternative to going to Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). The same number of collections are being offered as before their suspension, so normal business has been resumed.

Household Recycling Centres (HRCs)

- 8.1.6 BCC has now re-opened all 5 Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). At the beginning of reopening, we saw long queues of up to 3-4 hours at some HRCs, which led to the launch of a booking system on 8 June. This booking system will enable citizens to access HRCs while ensuring that COVID-19 social distancing measures are enforced.
- 8.1.7 From 11th June, only those with a booking, linked to the registration plate of their vehicle, have been permitted access to the HRCs, with no exceptions. Each vehicle is limited to one booking per week.

- 8.1.8 As this booking system has been introduced as an emergency queue mitigation measure, it is only available online. Citizens without access to the internet are advised to ask friends or family to make bookings for them.
- 8.1.9 To date 100% of all slots are being booked 6 days in advance and therefore given the success and popularity of the booking system we have introduced a number of additional slots at each of the HRC sites. We will continue to review these arrangements on a regular basis. We are continuing to experience a number of no shows at all HRC and this is about 13% of the daily allocation
- 8.1.10 Vans are now been permitted at all sites. Charges will apply to businesses, as per before the lockdown.
- 8.1.11 From Thursday 2nd July, Birmingham residents will be able to access the HRCs with trailers and vans. Social distancing measures and a booking system remain in place. Those wishing to visit the HRCs with a trailer 6x4ft or smaller must be a Birmingham resident disposing of household waste and recycling and will need to book their visit via the online booking system. Residents who wish to bring a large trailer (larger than 6x4ft) or a van will need to book a slot by calling the Van Booking Centre on 0203 567 3915 Monday - Friday from 8am-4pm.

Street Cleansing

- 8.1.12 No reduction in service has been reported, any spare capacity in refuse collection is being diverted to Street Cleansing. Street cleansing in the city centre will return to the two-shift system to take account of increased footfall when shops and offices reopen.
- 8.1.13 Extra street cleansing crews have been directed to the more problematic areas of the city including: Lozells, Washwood Heath and Alum Rock.

8.2 Parks and Grounds Maintenance

- 8.2.1 Parks and green spaces across Birmingham remain extremely busy, attracting more visitors than in previous years. Litter continues to be a problem across the majority of sites, with additional staff resource deployed to address the issue.
- 8.2.2 Reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) have reduced, but we have seen some large-scale gatherings in the north of the city (Sutton and Erdington), with at least two Dispersal Orders being used by West Midlands Police in Sutton Park. Dispersal Orders have also been used following social media advertisements of gatherings and raves.
- 8.2.3 The hot weather at the start of August led to a worrying increase in youths and families choosing to swim in park lakes and pools. Sutton Powell's pool was a particular hotspot. Parks worked with the Council and West Midlands Police to ensure foot patrols at the lake, and pushed messaging out through social media teams to dissuade this type of dangerous activity.

- 8.2.4 The city's 232 play areas and outdoor gyms reopened on 4th July, with signage displaying instructions for safe use and the maximum number of people allowed at one time. So far, their use has been without incident.
- 8.2.5 Team sports are now starting to recommence, including cricket (from 24th July), football and rugby (from 5th September). All teams must demonstrate that they are abiding by guidance from their sport's governance body.
- 8.2.6 Tennis courts and ball courts reopened on 2nd June, but players are advised to only use their own equipment.
- 8.2.7 Applications to use the parks for events are now being considered, mainly from community groups and for small training activities. All event applications must demonstrate that they can operate in a COVID-19 safe manner, with enhanced hygiene, social distancing, and contact details being collected to enable Track and Trace measures.
- 8.2.8 Volunteering has recommenced in some areas led by Friends of Parks Groups whilst maintaining social distancing in line with Government guidance. We welcome all the participants back and are working closely with Birmingham Open spaces Forum to ensure COVID-19 Secure Operating Procedures are in place and being followed.
- 8.2.9 Grass cutting is back to the normal programme across the city. Daily checks, safety inspections and essential works are being carried out.

9 Transport

- 9.1.1 COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown restrictions have had a huge impact on transport and travel patterns worldwide. In Birmingham traffic levels initially dropped to around a third of normal levels but have since increased to around 90% of normal levels on main roads as at mid-August 2020.

9.2 Public transport

- 9.2.1 By the start of July, National Express West Midlands had increased the frequency of bus services to normal service levels.
- 9.2.2 The emergency response on public transport continues to be co-ordinated by TfWM, and has included:
- 'Queue buster' trams introduced to help provide additional support in peak time on metro services, and the launch of 'travel heat map' for passengers showing the trend in travel times
 - Creation/production of exemption cards and badges for passengers exempt from wearing face coverings to raise awareness amongst other passengers and reduced potential for antisocial behaviour

- Free face masks distributed across bus stations, metro services, rail services and Travel & Information Services. Face coverings became mandatory on public transport on 15th June 2020.
- Targeted deployment of the Safer Travel Team issuing 'directions to leave' where customers are non-compliant with wearing a mask covering. This is following an initial two-week period of educating passengers. After an initial spike in 'directions to leave' this soon plateaued, seeing compliance levels approximately at 90% across all modes.
- West Midlands Trains introduced the RAG rating social distance information onto their website, this informs passengers of the current social distancing status for each service e.g. no issues to serious issues and the service will not stop.

9.3 Parking

- 9.3.1 We resumed parking charges from Monday 15th June 2020 at all pay and display location, however, the Government's concession scheme has remained in place meaning that for the time being some groups have been able to continue to park without charge.
- 9.3.2 We have reopened the Town Hall, Markets and Jewellery Quarter multi-storey car parks.
- 9.3.3 Millennium Point multi-storey will reopen on 1st September 2020 to accommodate the return of students and staff to Birmingham City University and Aston Universities.
- 9.3.4 We have facilitated the Military/NHS who continue to use our Brewery Street Coach and Lorry Park for a Covid-19 Mobile Testing Centre.

9.4 Road safety

- 9.4.1 We are continuing to promote national campaigns such as Road Safety GB's [Take Extra Care campaign](#) which urges all road users to continue to protect the emergency services by staying alert and traveling safely during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 9.4.2 All school staff in Birmingham were invited to attend a road safety webinar. This gave information on existing support and resources available, plus further guidance on the Take Extra Care Campaign and social distancing advice.
- 9.4.3 Above all, in order to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads in Birmingham, citizens are encouraged to walk or cycle where possible, particularly for shorter journeys.

9.5 Return to school travel advice

- 9.5.1 With greater numbers of pupils returning to schools, available space needs to be used effectively to ensure everyone can get around safely. Walking and cycling will play a vital role in ensuring that pupils are able to attend classes safely, helping to make space for those who have no alternative but to use public transport.
- 9.5.2 To support schools to plan for increased attendance and create extra space where needed outside schools, we can consider the introduction of emergency school streets measures such as temporary [Car Free School Streets](#), and [parking restrictions](#).
- 9.5.3 A [risk assessment](#) around the journey to and from school has been provided. In addition to this, further guidance has been produced related to [social distancing at the school gate](#).
- 9.5.4 We have been encouraging all schools to:
- Take part in [Modeshift STARS](#), which inspires the whole school community to travel sustainably, actively, responsibly and safely by championing walking, scooting and cycling.
 - Carry out school travel surveys with parents on their typical routes to school and potential alternatives.
 - School crossing patrol sites: stand further away from the patrol and wait for instruction to cross. Be aware that the warden may be operating from the other side of the crossing, which children and parents are not normally used to. Remind children not to make any physical contact with their lollipop person e.g. handshake/high five.
 - Reduce the frequency of, or retime, deliveries and servicing trips of suppliers.
 - Public transport: if there is no other option but to use public transport, plan journeys to avoid using busy interchanges where possible and checking <https://journeyplanner.networkwestmidlands.com/> which has up to date advice and information.
 - Working with Transport for West Midlands to develop a Back to School Travel Toolkit and support schools in delivering this.
- 9.5.5 A series of specific travel advice webinars and newsletters have been offered to schools.

9.6 Emergency Active Travel Fund – Delivering the Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan

- 9.6.1 On 27th May 2020 the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) of £225 million, allocated to combined and local authorities, would be released in two tranches. The first tranche of £45 million was released on the 26th June 2020. This initial tranche of funding was to be used to promote cycling and walking as a replacement for journeys previously made by public transport. This included measures such as closing roads to through traffic and installing segregated cycle lanes. The City Council received £1.131 million of this allocation.
- 9.6.2 It is anticipated that the second EATF tranche of £180 million will be released mid-September 2020. A West Midlands wide bid was submitted to the DfT on 7th August, which included an ask of £4.477 million to be allocated to Birmingham. Schemes to be funded under tranche 2 of EATF must be delivered by 31st March 2021.
- 9.6.3 Schemes to be delivered using the EATF grant will implement measures to create an environment that is safer for both walking and cycling. This will allow cycling in particular to replace some journeys previously made by public transport and will have an essential role to play in the short term in helping avoid overcrowding on public transport systems.
- 9.6.4 Schemes to be funded under the first tranche of EATF must commence delivery within four weeks of receipt of the funding by WMCA, and complete delivery within eight weeks of receipt of the funding. These schemes have been taken from the EBTP and their prioritisation for inclusion follows stakeholder and public engagement, alongside officer assessment of the practicalities and benefits of their delivery.
- 9.6.5 Delivery of tranche 1 schemes has already commenced and a summary of the packages of schemes are as follows:
- Transport space reallocation in Moseley and Stirchley local centres,
 - Low traffic neighbourhoods including Lozells and Kings Heath,
 - Pop-up cycle lanes along six routes across the city (consistent with routes identified in the Walking and Cycling Strategy and Infrastructure Improvement Plan).
 - Park & Pedal city-wide programme.
- 9.6.6 Tranche 2 schemes comprise of a combination of tranche 1 schemes to be made more permanent as well as delivering further schemes outlined in the EBTP. Schemes will include;

- Package 1: Tranche 1 Project enhancements; including transport space reallocations in Moseley and Stirchley local centre and cycle lanes along six corridors (consistent with routes identified in the Walking and Cycling Strategy and Infrastructure Improvement Plan).
- Package 2: Places for People – Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and School Streets; including 6 low traffic neighbourhood locations.
- Package 3: City Centre Traffic Cells.
- Package 4: Additional Cycling and Walking Interventions; including further pop-up cycle lanes across the city.

9.7 Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSF)

9.7.1 The following schemes were funded via a combination of RHSF funding, BCC emergency Covid-19 funding and reallocating existing resources from the Transportation and Highways Capital Programme:

- Delivering public realm changes in the city centre and local centres across the city to facilitate retail reopening safely with social distancing e.g. footway widening and markings, suspension of parking bays etc.
- Measures to support the reopening of the hospitality sector linked to changes to pavement license legislation and BID recovery plans including road closures.

9.8 Clean Air Zone

9.8.1 To try to forecast the possible impact of 'lockdown' on air quality for 2020 the CAZ team worked with the Council's environment team, the University of Birmingham (UoB) and the external consultants. While this modelling provides some guidance for what the results of the annual air quality survey might be there remains a high degree of uncertainty in the results due to the limited data available and the degree to which the scenarios used in the modelling hold true. The modelling indicates that air quality is predicted to still be in exceedance of the legal limits at a number of locations for 2020 (as measured as an annual mean). On this basis there remains the need to introduce a CAZ in order to reduce the levels of NO₂ to within legal limits.

9.8.2 Following agreement from Government the launch of the CAZ is postponed from summer 2020 to 2021. Feedback was sought from various stakeholders around the city, including the business community which has highlighted a number of concerns with the launch of the CAZ in early 2021. These concerns include the economic impact of COVID-19 on businesses and individuals and their ability to prepare for the introduction of the CAZ including the upgrading of vehicles and the perceived safety of public transport as an alternative to motor vehicle use. A

new launch date is yet to be announced. Additional factors influencing the launch date include an expectation from the business community and residents that the launch date for the CAZ will be confirmed no later than six months ahead of the actual launch and adherence to the ministerial direction which requires the Council to implement its plans for achieving compliance in the shortest possible time; as such, the current launch 'window' is from February 2021 to the end of June 2021.

9.9 Data for forward planning

- 9.9.1 Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) conducted a public survey on attitudes to travel and COVID-19. Circa 6,200 responses were received, of which around 40% of respondents were from Birmingham residents.
- 9.9.2 A further survey was carried out in June 2020 and circa 3400 responses were received, with 55% of responses from Birmingham residents.

9.10 Future public transport

- 9.10.1 On 8th August the DfT announced further financial support for bus and tram services in England to support people getting back to work and education spaces safety. The total value of support to operators will reach at least £700million, including £5.7m allocated to the West Midlands Metro.
- 9.10.2 The West Midland region's transport plan is to also be updated with a greater focus on meeting the West Midlands 2041 climate change challenge. The revised plan will also look to build on changes seen during the coronavirus pandemic, by further encouraging more cycling and walking, and cutting car use. Recent surveys carried out in the region show that three-quarters of people enjoyed seeing less traffic on the streets during lockdown, while levels of cycling and walking have hugely increased.
- 9.10.3 As the region prepares for schools to reopen the following interventions will be undertaken, as led by TfWM:
- National Express West Midlands introduced a function onto their website where passengers can check how busy buses are to help plan their journey
 - Metro launches 'Intent to travel app' where registered users can log intended future travel plans to help Metro to respond to service demand
 - Department for Education awarded £2.5m to WMCA to assist with the provision of school travel, cross party working commenced to identify where extra provision is required across the region.
 - Return to school's toolkit launched across all social media and schools' comms channels

- National Express will be making multiple service changes at the end of August. This will include strengthened services for school travel on their commercial network and see amended timetables to support the schools return.
- Uplift in Metro services in September returning to its pre-Covid 6-minute headway timetable for the peak times of service which is a return to 100% service.
- Further rail timetable uplift which will see provision for 100% capacity (but not 100% service yet).

10 Business Support

10.1.1 Since the last report to Full Council in June 2020, Birmingham City Council has continued to work with the local business community, regional partners and national government to support Birmingham's businesses.

10.2 Coronavirus Small Business Support Grants

10.2.1 Birmingham City Council has received an allocation of £231,576,000 to be paid out directly to 19,146 small businesses across Birmingham through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant Fund.

10.2.2 As of 21st August 2020, we have paid out a total of £211,555,000 to 17,608 small businesses. This equates to 92.67% of the total allocation. The administration of these grant schemes has posed significant challenges for the team, requiring the investment of significant resources into the development of automated checking and payment processes; however, overall it has been a success, with more grants paid out to more businesses than any other local authority in the United Kingdom.

10.2.3 There has been an additional incentive to maximise payments through these schemes, as the funds available for the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme is capped at 5% of monies paid out through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant Fund. More detail on this is provided below.

10.2.4 Where we already hold the bank details of eligible businesses, we have been able to pay out grants automatically. However, this only accounts for a very small minority of businesses in Birmingham. Payment of grants has therefore largely been reliant on businesses getting in touch through the BCC website to submit details for payment through an online form. The team has carried an extensive programme of business engagement and communications campaigns to encourage all eligible businesses to apply for grants. In addition to sending

out bulk emails, letters and text messages, our call centre has carried out over 5,800 telephone calls to potentially eligible businesses.

- 10.2.5 There are a number of reasons why a potentially eligible business may choose not to submit an application. Some businesses have not historically registered for business rates and are wary of receiving a backdated business rates bill. Other businesses have previously ceased trading and vacated the property, with neither the outgoing business nor the landlord updating the business rates record. We are now proactively reviewing the status of businesses that have not claimed for a grant, with inspectors carrying out site visits to determine if premises are empty/void and whether landlords should be rebilled for empty business rates.
- 10.2.6 The Coronavirus Small Business Support Grants schemes closed on 28th August 2020. Any unspent funds will need to be returned to national government; however, we will be able to move 5% of any unspent funding to 'top up' our Discretionary Business Grant Scheme.

10.3 Discretionary Business Grant Scheme

- 10.3.1 On 2nd May 2020, national government announced a further Discretionary Business Grant Scheme, aimed at small businesses outside the scope of the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund. This scheme is markedly different from the previous two schemes because, while there were some national criteria set for the fund, local authorities have been asked to design their own schemes and application processes. Local authorities are also able to determine which cases to support using additional locally set criteria.
- 10.3.2 Under the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme, local authorities are able to disperse grants to the value of £25,000, £10,000, or any amount under £10,000. The funding allocation to each local authority was set at 5% of projected spend for the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund. Birmingham City Council's allocation is therefore just over £10m.
- 10.3.3 These grants are primarily and predominantly aimed at:
- Small and micro businesses
 - Businesses with relatively high ongoing fixed property-related costs
 - Businesses which can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis
 - Businesses which occupy property, or part of a property, with a rateable value or annual rent or annual mortgage payments below £51,000
- 10.3.4 Due to the relatively small amount of funding available through this scheme, Birmingham City Council decided to structure the applications process into

'rounds', with funding allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis to eligible businesses within each round. We have worked closely with the business community, including the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), and regional partners to design a scheme that both avoids a 'postcode lottery' and ensure that the money helps the maximum of businesses possible.

10.3.5 Round One of the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme ran for two weeks from 1st June – 15th June 2020. For this round, we were asked by national government to prioritise the following types of businesses:

- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces. Examples could include units in industrial parks, science parks and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment;
- Regular market traders with fixed building costs, such as rent, who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- Bed & Breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

10.3.6 In addition to these nationally set criteria, we also applied the following local requirements:

- Small businesses employing less than 50 staff
- Businesses which can demonstrate at least a 30% drop in income due to the COVID-19 crisis
- Businesses with ongoing fixed commercial property-related costs (rent, service charge, lease, license, mortgage payments)
- Businesses mainly trading/based within the Birmingham City Council area

10.3.7 A total of 1,898 applications were received in Round One, with just under £4.5million of grants distributed to businesses. A more detailed breakdown of applications is provided in the table below.

Round 1 As of 24/08/2020	No. of businesses	No. of grants awarded			Total awarded
		<£10k	£10k	£25k	
Awaiting review	0				
In review (appeal)	1				

Audit investigation	1				
Rejected	800				
Closed as duplicate	67				
Appeal upheld but not yet paid	2				
TOTAL PAID	1027	956	66	5	£4,452,459.00
TOTAL APPLICATIONS	1898				

10.3.8 Round Two of the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme ran from 3rd August 2020 to 17th August 2020. For this round, we were able to drop the national eligibility criteria and open up the scheme to more businesses, inviting applications from small businesses across all business sectors.

10.3.9 A total of 1317 applications were received in Round Two. As of 2^{4th} August 2020, the majority of these applications were still being processed, however a detailed breakdown of applications is provided in the table below.

Round 2 As of 24/08/2020	No. of businesses	No. of grants awarded			Total awarded
		<£10k	£10k	£25k	
Going through initial checks	144				
Awaiting review	753				
In review	43				
Further evidence required	39				
Audit investigation	0				
Rejected	147				
Closed as duplicate	6				
Approved but not yet paid	1				
TOTAL PAID	184	117	26	41	£1,727,492
TOTAL APPLICATIONS	1317				

10.3.10 The below table shows the status of all applications received in both rounds of Discretionary Business Grant Scheme applications, as at 24th August 2020. So far, a total of £6,179,951 has been paid out to businesses across Birmingham.

Total DBG As of 24/08/2020	No. of businesses	No. of grants awarded			Total awarded
		<£10k	£10k	£25k	
Going through initial checks	144				
Awaiting review	753				
In review	44				
Further evidence required	39				
Audit investigation	1				
Rejected	947				
Closed as duplicate	73				
Approved but not yet paid	3				
TOTAL PAID	1211	1073	92	46	£6,179,951
TOTAL APPLICATIONS	3215				£6,179,951

11 Council Finances

11.1.1 The financial position provided below is correct as of 14th August 2020.

11.1.2 To date, national government has announced that the Council will receive £84.3m of unringfenced COVID-19 related funding, alongside a number of ringfenced funding grants as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Grant Funding Announced			
Grant	National Amount	BCC Amount	BCC %
	£m	£m	
Tranche 1	1,600	38.744	2.4%
Tranche 2	1,594	31.566	2.0%

Tranche 3	500	13.968	2.7%
Non-tax income funding	TBA	TBA	TBA
Total Unringfenced	3,694	84.278	2.2%
Infection Control	600	9.761	1.5%
Reopening High Streets Safely Fund	50	1.017	2.1%
Test and Trace Service	300	8.439	2.9%
Emergency Assistance Grant for Food & essential Supplies	63	1.923	3.1%
Emergency Accommodation Interventions	105	TBA	TBA
Total	4,812	105.418	2.2%

11.1.3 The Government did not announce the basis of allocation of the first tranche of funding, but it appears to be based on need assessment formulae. The second tranche of funding has been allocated on a per capita basis. It is disappointing that the Council has received a lower level of funding in the second tranche given the forecast costs it has raised with the Government.

11.1.4 The Government announced a further tranche of unringfenced funding on 2 July 2020, specifically to fund expenditure pressures, of which Birmingham has been allocated a further £14m. The Government has held back £6m of the national allocation to provide additional support to councils dealing with pressures due to high numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. As Birmingham only has a small unaccompanied asylum seekers population, it is unlikely that there will be any material allocation for the city. Government, further announced a new co-payment scheme to fund the majority of irrecoverable income losses from sales, fees and charges. Where losses are more than 5% of that planned, then 75% of losses will be met by Government. Initial estimates are that Birmingham may receive a further £22.1m of funding from this scheme when based on reported losses for the 6 month period.

11.1.5 The total forecast additional spend/loss of income to the Council on COVID-19 related general fund activities for **2020/21 and 2021/22 is £236.719m**. This is inclusive of additional expenditure, loss of income and likely risk materialising. The 2021/22 position will be better understood as we start to plan recovery and the “new norm”. The table below provides an overview of pressures the Council is facing between years.

Table 2: Forecast Pressures on Expenditure and Income			
Financial Year	Expenditure £m	Income £m	Total £m
2020/21	90.334	68.700	159.034
2021/22	7.472	70.213	77.685
Gross GF Pressures	97.806	138.913	236.719
Grant Received	N/A	N/A	(84.278)
Net GF Pressures	97.806	138.913	152.441

11.1.6 The two-year costs identified to date have exceeded the allocation of £84.278m granted to Birmingham by £152.441m (including identified risks) for General Fund.

11.1.7 The current assumption for the financial position for 2020/21 is based on a 6 month premise for the duration of the Covid-19 along with some residual costs.

11.1.8 It should be noted that additional costs are beginning to be identified for 2022/23 and beyond due to slippage on planned savings proposals, including lower assumptions around ability to grow income.

11.1.9 Basis and assumptions:

- Forecasts are based on decisions and emerging actions
- Where estimated figures have been used these will continue to be reviewed and updated.
- Where costs were given as a range, the higher value has been used.
- We have assumed a duration of April through September where services have been closed as a result of social isolating policy from national government, such as leisure centres.

11.1.10 A return on the latest estimates of costs and losses of income due to COVID-19 was submitted to MHCLG on 31 July 2020. Previously MHCLG asked for all authorities to submit a return that assumed the duration of the crisis was 4 months. This MHCLG return asks for full year costs. The Council estimated total costs in 2020/21 of £257.872m general fund and £6.276m HRA. This includes expenditure in relation to the Test and Trace, Infection Control, Reopening High Streets Safely, Emergency Welfare Assistance and Hardship grants. This is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: MHCLG July Return Summary	
2020/21 Impact	£m
Additional Costs	104.439
Income Losses (after Business Rates Relief)	128.295
Ringfenced Grant Expenditure (e.g. Test and Trace Funding)	25.138
Total General Fund Impact	257.872
HRA Impact	6.276
Total Impact Submitted to MHCLG	264.148

Infection Control Grant

11.1.11 The Council has received an allocation of £9.8m as part of the £600m Infection Control funding. Seventy five percent of this allocation (£7.3m) will be allocated directly to care homes in 2 tranches – one in June and the other in August 2020 based on the current number of Care Quality Commission beds registered within each home and in accordance with the grant determination requirements. To date, payments have been made to 296 homes. Payments for the first tranche have totalled £3.6m to date. Payments for the second tranche are due to commence next week. The balance of the funding (£2.5m) will be used to support extra care, supported living and home support providers with infection control.

Test and Trace Service Support Grant

11.1.12 The Council has received £8.4m to develop and action its plans to reduce the spread of the virus in the local area. Spending plans are in the process of being developed, but as at 7 August 2020, commitments totalled just over £8.2m (£5.5m in 2020/21 and £2.7m in 2021/22) covering salary costs, software and system costs, communications, equipment, enforcement and welfare support and community swabbing.

Welfare Assistance Fund

11.1.13 An additional £63m has been confirmed by Government on 11 June 2020 to assist those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID. Birmingham has been allocated £1.9m. Spending plans are in the process of being developed.

Reopening the High Streets Safely

11.1.14 The Council was allocated £1.017m and expects to spend this fully in 2020/21.

Cashflow and borrowing issues

- 11.1.15 The Government has responded to potential cashflow pressures by providing major COVID funding in advance, including the general support grant to local authorities and the funding for business support.
- 11.1.16 If we do have short term cashflow deficits, the main source of short-term borrowing for local authorities is other local authorities. Although initially the local authority cash market tightened it is now back to normal, however there remains a risk of it tightening again.
- 11.1.17 It is still too early to be clear about the additional cost of borrowing to meet COVID-19 related cashflows for the period before they are permanently funded. Using currently known costs and funding, an interest cost of £1.7m over the next two years has been calculated at PWLB interest rates.

11.2 Corporate Procurement Services

- 11.2.1 Corporate Procurement has played a lead role both within the Council and regionally in sourcing essential PPE during the pandemic to ensure delivery of sustainable sources of supply that match the demand profile in accordance with required standards and at the best possible prices for the duration of the pandemic.
- 11.2.2 Processes, supplier due diligence and governance was established quickly to ensure that only the right quality of PPE was ordered as quality and cost varied considerably. During the crisis Corporate Procurement identified and validated offers from over 1300 organisations capable of supplying PPE. The success of the approach to date has resulted in the Council procuring over 11.2 million items of PPE of which 6.5 million items are for other LAs.
- 11.2.3 Key enabling activities carried out in the “React” phase to establish our approach include:
- Emergency Procurement Governance established under regulation 32(2)(c) and regulation 72 (1) under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 including a new award report template for PPE.
 - Vetting processes developed for supplier, product and test certificates to be verified, involving colleagues in Finance, Legal Services, Trading Standards, Health and Safety, Public Health and Audit.
 - Established and promoted an e-mailbox for suppliers to register their PPE offers with BCC.
 - Recorded suppliers’ offers to prioritise those companies that we should negotiate with.

- Created a Microsoft 'Team' enabling collaboration with West Mids Heads of Procurement to aggregate demand to reduce prices.
- Supported the WMCA to launch its supplier registration form.
- Attendance at Facilities cell and circulating weekly progress reports on procurement activities.
- Developing a procurement model to enable adjustments in our purchasing based on weekly demand profiles (BCC and 3rd party support e.g. care providers, schools etc.); LRF volumes; PPE minimum stock levels and PPE on order to maintain resilience up to at least December 2020.
- Attendance at LGA National Advisory sub-group for PPE that includes regional Heads of Procurement reps from across England to share experiences; discuss proposed approaches and feedback to MHCLG, Cabinet Office, DHSC on issues being experienced in order to effect national improvements.
- Two separate meetings with MHCLG to provide further details on our experience of LRF, budget issues and the approach adopted in the West Midlands.
- Representing BCC at the Midlands Engine meeting and a Warwickshire Manufacturing Alliance meeting.
- Hosting meetings of the West Midlands Heads of Procurement to discuss position/issues and tactical/strategic options as well as updating on feedback from LGA meetings.
- To improve our resilience up to at least December 2020, we are having all of the stock delivered that is currently on order.

11.2.4 In addition to PPE, the Procurement team has now sourced equipment to support the re-opening of buildings such as screens, signs, tape, sanitiser stands/gel etc.

11.2.5 The Council is now moving into the recovery phase as the increased amount of supply means that we can no longer rely on the above PCR15 provisions and should now look to either establish a regional contracting arrangement or use national supply arrangements e.g. from Crown Commercial Services.

11.2.6 DHSC has indicated that reimbursements for clinical PPE purchased to date are likely to be offered (approximately. £1.5M for BCC subject to the exact terms which have yet to be published) as well as proposing an arrangement for PPE to be supplied FOC until March 2021. Neither of these have yet been confirmed in writing, but it seems that they are likely to be contingent on us not establishing our own contracting arrangements for clinical PPE prior to March 2021.

12 Recovery Planning

12.1 Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on our communities

- 12.1.1 It is widely recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated longstanding structural inequalities across Birmingham and the United Kingdom. This not only includes inequalities related to 'protected characteristics' such as ethnicity, gender, and age, but a much broader set of inequalities and wider determinants of health such as deprivation, education, work security, and access to healthcare services.
- 12.1.2 As well as bringing existing inequalities to the fore, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions created new social divides that drastically affected quality of life during lockdown and the ability of some households to 'bounce back' once restrictions were lifted. Things that might once have been viewed as luxuries, such as the ability to work from home, access to green space and gardens, and internet connectivity are now seen as essential protective factors for households, enabling some families to pass lockdown in relative ease while others saw a massive detrimental impact on mental health and income.
- 12.1.3 Understanding how the crisis has affected, and will continue to affect, different communities and households across the city is vital to shaping the recovery strategy for Birmingham. As a Council, we are committed to understanding the reasons why the pandemic hit some groups harder than others and taking action to directly address the structural inequalities that persist in our city.
- 12.1.4 In July 2020, an initial report was taken to Cabinet bringing together all the (then) available evidence on the differential impact of COVID-19 on Birmingham's communities, across a range of different vulnerabilities including ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion and socioeconomic status. This report also outlined the ways in which some groups might continue to be disadvantaged through recovery unless targeted policy actions were incorporated into recovery programmes. The report is available [here](#).
- 12.1.5 Across the Council, an extensive programme of work is taking place to understand the impact of COVID-19 on communities and people's experiences of the pandemic. This local insight and intelligence will be used as part of an evidence-led approach to recovery, building a rich, localised and meaningful picture of the impact of COVID-19 across the city. This will include targeted engagement with groups who have been the most adversely affected by the pandemic and/or are likely to be hardest hit in the longer term.
- 12.1.6 Some of the work to date includes:
- The establishment of a regional Taskforce, co-chaired by Councillor Hamilton, to gather evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on BAME

communities, including conducting a series of public hearings to listen to first-hand accounts of people's experiences. These findings contributed to a review into the coronavirus impact on BAME communities.

- Through Public Health, the commissioning of ethnographic studies of Birmingham residents to explore the prolonged impacts of COVID-19, their experiences of the system and specific services, and what support is needed for them as individuals as well as for communities and the city overall. This work is due to be completed in November 2020, with the findings included in the Director of Public Health Annual Report (published in 2021).
- Partnering with Lewisham Council to explore health inequalities affecting African and Caribbean communities and a range of broader issues (for example, access to treatment and management support, specific health conditions, and wider determinants of health).
- Through Education and Skills, working with the University of Birmingham to better understand the implications for education of COVID-19, including gathering insight through a parent/carer survey. This partnership is looking to take lessons learnt during COVID-19 to improve education in the longer-term.
- Through the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit (NDSU), the commissioning of Locality to undertake research and analysis on the response to COVID-19 by Birmingham's community sector, including understanding what learning can be aligned with the [Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper](#) going forward.

12.1.7 The findings from this programme of work will help to shape and refine recovery planning, including how we will work with communities and partners to drive structural change, reduce inequalities and build a more inclusive economy. Reports will be brought to Cabinet and the City Council for decisions and updates where appropriate and as different pieces of work progress.

12.2 Economic Recovery Strategy

12.2.1 As part of a wider recovery programme, a draft 'COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan' has been developed which sets out how the Council intends to support Birmingham's economy to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and adapt to new challenges such as Brexit. This is a working document, which will continue to evolve over the coming months as we engage with local stakeholders and partners.

12.2.2 The COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of businesses it required is having a seriously damaging impact on the Birmingham economy, setting back the impressive economic growth we have seen in recent years. The UK has seen a

20% fall in GDP in a single month and Birmingham has already seen an increase of over 30,000 (62%) in claimant count unemployment since the beginning of lockdown. Some of this impact will be short-lived (GDP is predicted to bounce back in the third quarter), but some will be longer term and there is a severe risk of longer term "scarring" from the loss of jobs.

- 12.2.3 As we move from the initial emergency into the recovery phase, the City Council, alongside government, the West Midlands Combined Authority and other public agencies will need to do all it can to mitigate the impact on our economy. Recovery will be a lengthy process in many sectors, and each sector will need to respond differently and in different timescales, partly according to the lifting of "lockdown" regulations.
- 12.2.4 We are fortunate to already have a range of ambitious growth plans in place that will play a key role in driving the economic recovery, including the Birmingham Development Plan, the Big City Plan, the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy, and the Midlands HS2 Growth Strategy. We also have a commitment to a low carbon future through the Route to Zero programme, the implementation of the Clean Air Zone in the city centre, and the Birmingham Transport Plan. While all these plans are still valid, the profound impact of COVID-19 has called for a shift in our approach, and redoubled efforts to promote inclusive growth and challenge the 'old normal' in economic development.
- 12.2.5 The crisis has revealed the scale of the things we need to put right, but it has also highlighted our capacity to adapt and take radical action when this is called for. Our recovery plans will therefore focus on identifying opportunities to progress four main priorities:
- Creating a more inclusive economy and tackling the inequalities and injustices highlighted by the crisis
 - Taking more radical action to achieve zero carbon and a green and sustainable city
 - Strengthening our public services and creating new services to address needs
 - Building the strength and resilience of our communities, based on the positive response to the crisis.
- 12.2.6 Action will be taken under four key headings, reflecting the distinct role of the City Council:
- **Place development and management**
- Once the public health crisis has ended it is vital that we as a city develop a long-term response which recognises that the economic damage inflicted by COVID19 will be felt differently across our city.

Without a place-based economic response, the inequalities that we saw before the Coronavirus will become even more entrenched and our objectives to deliver inclusive growth will be even harder to achieve.

The City Centre has developed into a major economic asset for Birmingham; however in just a few short months life in the centre has dramatically changed. It is vital that we work with our partners and stakeholders to try and understand what the future holds for the city centre and the people living and working in it. Our responses will also move beyond the city centre and will prioritise our high streets and urban centres; helping to drive their reinvigoration and transform them into diverse, well-connected and unique hubs at the heart of local communities.

- **Green recovery**

The City Council's declaration of a climate emergency together with the introduction of new development and transport policies will accelerate the opportunity to drive growth in new markets, including smart and future mobility, a shift to zero emission vehicles and green technology. Improvements in quality of life - including less pollution and congestion, need to be embraced after the pandemic; fortunately, the Council has a strong suite of policies, such as the Birmingham Transport Plan and Clean Air Zone, that can help support the shift and deliver new economic opportunities. There is also an opportunity to reframe the Big City Plan as a vital document in the next stage of city centre development, with a focus on low carbon and sustainable development.

- **Supporting people and businesses**

As home to a young and ethnically diverse population, our region has been disproportionately exposed to the negative jobs impacts of the economic crisis. There is a risk that without urgent intervention, young people are at risk of entering the labour market during a severe downturn, exposing them to the risk of unemployment and longer-term scarring effects. Similarly, many older workers, including those in the automotive and manufacturing sector have lost their jobs or have been furloughed.

We need to ensure that the recovery phase and planned economic growth creates broad-based opportunities that benefits all of our communities. It will be vital that we support our communities to obtain the right skills to access employment opportunities.

- **Unlocking and accelerating infrastructure investment**

The city has some unique opportunities as a result of investment in HS2 and through being host to the Commonwealth Games. By accelerating major infrastructure investments we can unlock growth opportunities

across the city. The Council has a portfolio of major transport and infrastructure projects of a scale that has the potential to provide significant numbers of jobs as well as improving how people and goods move about the city. As well as the investment and jobs generated by the schemes themselves created in the construction phases better transport is key to opening up job and training opportunities, to providing access for all to essential services including health and education and to supporting individual self-development and fulfilment. Our focus needs to be on ensuring we stay committed and help deliver what is a major pipeline of transport and infrastructure projects.