

Birmingham City Council

City Council

9 June 2020



Subject: Birmingham City Council's response to COVID-19
Report of: Cabinet
Report authors: Professor Graeme Betts (Gold Commander March to May 2020 & Director, Adult Social Care)

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 detail the Council's response to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, the biggest challenge faced by both the city and the country since the Second World War.
- 1.2. In addition, the report provides information relating to the impacts on the city as a whole (to date) together with highlighting potential areas of work as focus moves away from the 'emergency' response towards shaping the city's recovery and renewal.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the report be noted.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. At the time of writing this report, Birmingham has lost 1,076 people to COVID-19. This number is not just a statistic. Every single death as a result of this disease is a personal tragedy for families, friends and communities alike, with a lasting impact that will continue to reverberate long after the pandemic ends. It is

therefore right and appropriate that we begin this report by acknowledging this great loss, and extending our deepest condolences to everyone who has lost loved ones as a result of this crisis.

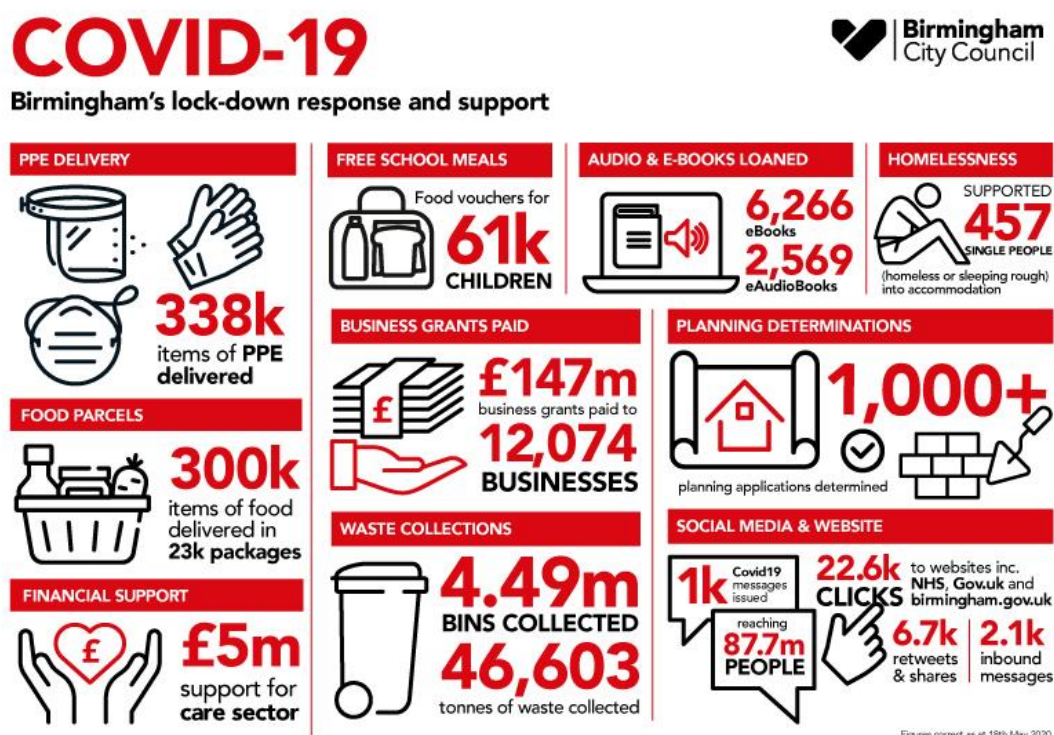
- 3.2. Birmingham City Council would also like to recognise and commend the significant sacrifices made by our citizens and communities over the lockdown period. We know that this has been a difficult period for many people, requiring significant changes to the way that we all live, work and go about our daily lives. However, by staying at home and abiding by the lockdown restrictions, you have all played an important part in safeguarding our most vulnerable, protecting our hospitals and essential services, and easing the strain on key workers.
- 3.3. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic is both a collective and personal tragedy, we have also seen a once-in-a-lifetime display of community spirit, with thousands of citizens going above and beyond to volunteer and provide vital help and support to others in their communities. From volunteering at foodbanks to providing much-needed emotional support and personal contact for shielded people, from clapping for carers to the many beautiful pieces of art and messages of support displayed in windows across the city, we have been honoured to witness a true outpouring of the 'Birmingham' spirit. Once again, we are reminded that what makes our city truly special is not our buildings or infrastructure – but our people.
- 3.4. We know that the citizens of Birmingham will join us in thanking all of our frontline and key workers, who have done so much to keep us safe and keep our city running during this crisis. Over the last two months, teams across Birmingham City Council have worked tirelessly to keep our services going, finding ever more innovative and inspiring ways to support citizens throughout lockdown.
- 3.5. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to all our partners across the city – all our statutory partners, including the NHS and the police, our voluntary and charity organisations, our faith and community groups, and all our partners on the Birmingham City Board. Working together in partnership through this crisis has proved what we have always known – that what we can achieve working together is far greater than what we can achieve as individuals. This is only one of the lessons that we will take forward into recovery.
- 3.6. On 27th March 2020 the Council declared a Major Incident in response to the emerging COVID-19 crisis having previously activated its Emergency Planning and Business Continuity arrangements. This was necessary to deal with the unprecedented pressures brought about by Coronavirus, ensuring Council services were able to continue to support our most vulnerable residents. This report details the Council's activity over the past ten weeks to ensure that

Birmingham's citizens and businesses have been, and continue to be, kept safe and supported over this time.

3.7 Details in relation to specific areas of response can be found as follows:

- Health & Wellbeing; pages 4 - 14
- Education & Skills; pages 14 - 28
- Communities (including Housing, Bereavement Services); pages 28 - 45
- Street Scene & Parks (including Waste Management); pages 45 - 47
- Transport; pages 47 - 53
- Business Support; pages 53 - 60
- Council Tax Support/COVID-19 Hardship Fund; pages 60 - 61
- Council Finances; pages 61 - 64
- City-Wide Impacts & Future Look; pages 64 - 68

3.8 The infographic below gives a brief overview of some of the activity that has been delivered to date.



- 3.9 This report is a snapshot in time and will be updated, as we continue to deal with the unique pressures that COVID-19 brings and as we move forward to recovery.

4. Health & Wellbeing

4.1 Adult Social Care

Supporting and protecting our shielded and vulnerable

- 4.1.1 Adult Social Care has been working 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.
- 4.1.2 During this time the directorate has refocused its Neighbourhood Network Schemes programme to support the COVID-19 response and commissioned Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) to lead on capturing and sharing community activities responding to COVID-19. 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
- 4.1.3 A Food Sustainability Group has been set up with the following strands of activity:
- Standardising the contents of food parcels
 - Research into the changes in demand for food as a result of COVID-19
 - Procuring new short-term framework arrangements for the provision of emergency food parcels
 - Establishing alternative pathways of support to access food
 - Predictive modelling to understand the demand for food across the city
 - Communications and media
- 4.1.4 The Directorate have been working with the Council's Insight Programme to look at vulnerability across the city to understand and develop policies and strategies to support vulnerable citizens. Enablement staff are undertaking safe and well checks where a shielded person who requested a food parcel

did not open their door. As of mid-May, the team have undertaken 176 visits.

Supporting safe discharge from hospital (including Care Act Easements)

- 4.1.5 Adult Social Care has moved to a Discharge to Assess model in acute hospitals, which has seen a significant reduction in discharge delays and have continued our emphasis on a “home first” approach. The directorate are now preparing for a possible surge as unmet need come forward and hospitals begin to resume routine services.
- 4.1.6 There is acknowledgement from NHS partners and Birmingham Adult Safeguarding Board that Adult Social Care teams working in hospitals have stepped up to the challenges around increasing pressures and expected demand, by effectively redirecting resources where they are most needed and prioritising individual care needs both short and long term, to protect our vulnerable citizens.
- 4.1.7 Care Act Easements under the Coronavirus Act 2020 are designed to allow councils to respond flexibly – at scale and pace – to increased demand and local resource and capacity pressures. These are temporary powers and once the emergency period is over, any delayed Care Act compliant assessments, care and support plans, and reviews will be completed in full.
- 4.1.8 The only easements agreed during this period related to streamlining assessments, including not providing hard copies of assessments/support plans and limiting the choice of providers, in recognition of the limited options due to pressures in the care provider sector. This decision was informed by dialogue with health partners and was kept under regular review, with information available on the City Council’s website.
- 4.1.9 The directorate subsequently took the decision that, given that the peak of COVID-19 deaths and infections now appears to have passed, and capacity in the health and care system has improved, to cease use of the easements with effect from 18th May 2020. We are now in the process of revisiting the assessments undertaken during this period, alongside continuing our ongoing work with providers and partners to ensure that citizens receive the care and support that they need. The provisions in Coronavirus Act 2020 remain in place should the situation deteriorate.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 4.1.10 A PPE group was quickly established by the directorate in the early stages of the COVID-19 emergency response, supporting teams across the council and independent providers who need PPE to continue to deliver critical services.
- 4.1.11 Demand for PPE remains high, with supplies very limited at points. The delivery of PPE from Government supplies that have consistently contained date expired stock or items that have failed safety tests has not aided the

situation. Efforts continue to obtain PPE from alternative sources and due diligence is carried out on all offers of PPE received.

- 4.1.12 Procurement of further PPE is being undertaken in partnership with regional local authorities, to increase our purchasing power and very large orders with manufacturers and suppliers are being placed as a result.
- 4.1.13 With demand for PPE high and pressure on supply chains, prioritisation of how the stock is used is required. This has enabled services that most need PPE to remain equipped. The top priority is being 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.
- 4.1.14 As well as supplying PPE to across our staff there is a need to support other independent providers who provide critical services to citizens. The issues faced by care homes and other carers in sourcing PPE have been well publicised. The directorate have responded to this by providing emergency supplies of PPE to an increasing number of care providers including care homes, domiciliary care agencies and personal assistants. 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.
- 4.1.15 PPE stock usage is being reported back to Local Resilience Forums on a weekly basis, in line with their requirements.

Support to care homes (including testing and financial support)

- 4.1.16 The Adults Directorate have been working closely with Care Homes to support them during the response to COVID-19. 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 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.
- 4.1.17 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 the enhanced swabbing process for Birmingham.
- 4.1.18 Local enhanced testing arrangements will be used for all care homes that are not eligible to request their testing via the national portal and for homes that wish to take up the wider support offer available locally as part of the testing service. We can provide tests and get results within 48 hours, and if there is a COVID-19 positive result we can provide quick wraparound support through

providing advice on self-isolation and enhanced GP and nursing care and support with staffing.

- 4.1.19 Alongside this, a National scheme is in place for care homes for the elderly and those with patients where home testing swabs can be sent out directly to them. The key issue of concern with the national schemes is that the test results take 5-7 days and the test results go directly to the care home who are busy dealing with the crisis. So, by the time the City Council are informed due to testing result delays the infection could have spread before we are able to provide the much-needed advice on support isolating patients and providing the wraparound care needed.
- 4.1.20 There have been a number of issues where we are supporting our care homes
- Providers being unable to get onto the testing portal
 - Some providers have received the nationally provided test kits without clear instructions
 - Providers have reported that their completed test kits have not been collected by the national courier service and then retesting has been required for residents
 - There have been significant delays in obtaining test results via the national route – some providers are reporting over 2 weeks for results to be returned
 - Providers who don't support the over 65s or those with dementia cannot understand why they have been deprioritised for testing
- 4.1.21 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.
- 4.1.22 Whilst we do have a large number of care providers (296 homes) and residents (7,200), we are confident we can provide a more holistic testing and support offer based on local intelligence from across our health and social care system and are aiming to complete this by mid-June.
- 4.1.23 We have provided a strong level of financial support for Care homes, implementing previously agreed fee increase that reflects inflation and National Living Wage, as well as reimbursement of additional costs e.g. staffing, PPE on an open book basis for any additional costs since 16 March. In addition to this we have agreed a one-off payment of £1000 be paid to care homes facilitating admissions on discharge from hospital / short term bed.
- 4.1.24 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 increase or decrease care required.

Testing

- 4.1.25 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 a national care home testing request portal for some care homes.
- 4.1.26 Laboratory capacity across the Midlands has steadily increased both for patient and staff testing and postal testing for staff who are unable to drive has also gone live. There are between 1-2,000 tests a day being carried out in the West Midlands, including staff testing, with capacity for this to be significantly increased.
- 4.1.27 Testing for Adult Social Care staff is available via two routes, the government self-referral website for essential workers or via BCC Occupational Health. Both routes enable staff and members of their household who are showing symptoms of the virus to request a test. These routes have been embedded within directorate process to ensure that staffing levels are known, and services can continue, as well as appropriate health and wellbeing support offered to staff.
- 4.1.28 Following the government announcement about antibody tests for social workers on Thursday 21st May, discussions have started with Birmingham and Solihull CCG around setting up a process to administer this, as well as configuring equipment to run the tests. This is a new development and plans are only just starting to be formulated.

Safeguarding

- 4.1.29 The greatest impact on practice during the pandemic has been working to guidance on social distancing when working with vulnerable adults. Social Workers have been avoiding face to face contact, especially in care home settings, wherever possible. Practitioners have explored other means of engaging with vulnerable adults and eliciting their views. Where face to face contact has been necessary, this has occurred only after a risk assessment and the provision of appropriate PPE.
- 4.1.30 Following lockdown, there was an initial fall in safeguarding concerns raised with the City Council. This is in line with the experience of LAs across the region and beyond. Over the past four weeks (as of 21st May), however, the numbers of concerns have returned to the average for the 12 months prior to lockdown. Additional staffing resources have been identified to address any safeguarding pressures that might arise.

Supporting our carers

- 4.1.31 Adult Social Care have continued to work with and support our carers since the start of the emergency response to the pandemic. The carers support service has been temporarily reconfigured to optimise the support to carers through these challenging times.

Birmingham Carers' Hub and Integrated Commissioning

- 4.1.32 The reconfiguration of services at the Birmingham Carers Hub and additional services provided as a result of integrated commissioning across the City Council, our Children's Trust and the CCGs has seen a significant increase in telephone responders as workforce personnel have been pulled back from face-to-face and group activities. This has enabled outreach/safe and well checks via telephone to commence, targeting the most vulnerable registered carers first. This has supported one-off COVID-19 specific payments to carers who have been identified as being in financial hardship or who are destitute and the updating of carers assessments and subsequent wellbeing plans.
- 4.1.33 A dedicated COVID-19 specific webpage providing advice, guidance and links to government guidance has been established and a contingency planning toolkit for carers to help them create "what if" plans. Alongside this, there has been signposting to national resources, such as Carers UK and significant increase in social media notifications, as well as emails giving contemporary advice and guidance for carers.
- 4.1.34 Other carer areas of activity include:
- tailored guidance specific to minimising the spread of COVID-19, specifically what to do if carer/household member becomes symptomatic
 - emergency council phone number for carers who may become symptomatic / household requires interim emergency care package
 - introduce videoconferencing mutual aid / support groups
 - increase distribution of a Birmingham Carers ID cards (locally, carers are being given the same concessions as key workers with this ID)
 - linking carers to neighbourhood networks/ BVSC coordinated third sector offers including food deliveries, shopping and companionship
 - tailored dementia carer COVID-19 specific support

Finance

- 4.1.35 The financial impact of the COVID-19 virus on the Adults Budget is currently estimated to be £55.2m. However, the full financial impact will depend upon the final scope and timescale of the pandemic. Current estimates are based on the following assumptions:

- Costs are on the basis that lockdown will continue to impact through the second quarter of the financial year,
- A number of costs cannot be fully quantified at this stage and have been included either as a provision for anticipated costs or based on financial risk assessment, and
- It is anticipated that additional discharge pathways costs including care and support will be recovered from Health through CCG COVID-19 funding.

4.2 Public Health

- 4.2.1 Our Public Health Director Dr Justin Varney has been leading on supporting the City to respond to the COVID-19 challenges.
- 4.2.2 Over the past few months the Cabinet Member has been sending weekly Public Health briefings to elected members providing a short summary of the current data on Coronavirus in Birmingham. This section of the report provides the latest data as of **27th May 2020**.
- 4.2.3 Birmingham has the fifth highest rate of confirmed cases in the West Midlands, lower than Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Solihull.
- 4.2.4 Amongst the Core Cities, Birmingham has the **fourth** highest rate, behind Sheffield, Newcastle Upon Tyne and Liverpool.
- 4.2.5 The effective reproduction number (R0) at 17/05/2020 in the West Midlands is 0.8 (England = 0.9).
- 4.2.6 Learning from deaths of people with learning disabilities (LeDaR) programme has reported 45% of deaths of people with learning disabilities were attributed to COVID-19. In the same period, 28% of deaths in the general population were COVID-19 related. This is based on deaths reported to LeDaR during the period 16th March to 10th May 2020.
- 4.2.7 ONS have linked the 2011 census to mortality data to enable national analysis by ethnicity. When comparing COVID-19 deaths to non-COVID-19 deaths in the under 64 year old group, we can see that black males had the highest ratio, at 0.59: with black females having the highest ratio for this age group, at 0.48. In the older age group of 65+, black ethnic groups of both genders had the highest ratios.
- 4.2.8 Overall COVID-19 staff absence across BSOL STP due to sickness or self-isolation appears to be declining marginally
- 4.2.9 Community deaths for Birmingham, reported by Office for National Statistics (ONS), are reported weekly and include deaths outside of hospital so are a more comprehensive picture than just hospital deaths. The most recent ONS data covers deaths up until the 15th May, this analysis highlights that:

- In the week ending 15th May there were 57 deaths attributed to COVID-19.
- Overall there have been 1,076 deaths attributed to COVID-19 up to the 15th May in Birmingham, the majority of these were in hospital (75%), followed by Care Homes (16%) and deaths at home (4%) and in hospices (3%). This compares to a larger proportion of all cause City deaths being in Care Homes (20%) and at Home (23%).
- So far in 2020 there have been approximately over 1,400 excess deaths compared to the 5yr average death numbers for the same period, this is predominantly due to COVID-19 but not completely.

- 4.2.10 The ONS published on the 1st May more detailed analysis of deaths from COVID-19 by Medium Super Output Area which is searchable by postcode. This reflects the first 103 deaths from COVID-19 in Birmingham up until the 17th April. The largest number of deaths was reported in the Chester Road area and there is a correlation between the areas with the highest number of deaths during this period and those areas with high number of care homes which may explain some of the local variation.
- 4.2.11 Data has also been published on deaths in care homes notified to CQC, this covers the period up to the week ending the 22nd May. Nationally 10,636 deaths from COVID-19 were reported in this period, 150 of these were in care homes in Birmingham. Birmingham has the 19th highest number of deaths in care homes, the highest number to date is in 347 deaths in Hampshire.
- 4.2.12 ONS also published more detailed analysis of the deaths between the 1st March and 17th April and standardised death rates taking into account the age structure of the local population. In this analysis the highest age-standardised mortality rates from COVID-19 were all London Boroughs, Newham had the highest age-standardised rate with 144.3 deaths per 100,000 population. In comparison Birmingham's age-standardised rate was 78 deaths per 100,000, this is still higher than much of the country although the rates are in general higher in core cities, e.g. Liverpool 81.8 deaths per 100,000.
- 4.2.13 The national analysis highlights an increased age-standardised mortality rate in more deprived areas and this is higher than the inequality seen in 'all cause' mortality.
- 4.2.14 ONS has published analysis of deaths up to the 10th April that shows that there is a statistically significant difference in death rates from COVID-19 even when standardised for age and some socio-economic factors, especially for Black African/Caribbean men and women and Pakistani and Bangladeshi men, and

this will be explored in more detail through the national review of COVID-19 risk factors being led by Public Health England.

- 4.2.15 ONS analysis of COVID-19 deaths by occupation up to 20th of April shows that men working in the lowest skilled occupations had the highest rates of COVID-19 mortality. Raised rates of death were found in social care for both men and women but not in healthcare workers. Among men occupations with the highest rate of mortality included security guards, taxi drivers and chauffeurs, bus and coach drivers, chefs, and sales and retail assistants. The analysis does not prove that the death rates are caused by occupational exposure as factors such as ethnicity and place of residence were not adjusted for in the analysis.

Special Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting

- 4.2.16 The Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board (BHWB) held an emergency meeting on Thursday 23rd April 2020 in response to rising concerns in our communities around the health inequalities being vocalised by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) populations during the current Coronavirus-19 epidemic. The special meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board brought together local partners to discuss the emerging intelligence from local hospital analysis and respond to questions from the public. Over 200 people submitted over 600 questions. Following the meeting the Cabinet Member sent a letter to the Secretary of State for Health with the full set of questions and a link to the recording.
- 4.2.17 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health and the Director of Public Health were invited to an engagement roundtable with Professor Fenton and the Association of Directors of Public Health to discuss the national review. Following the meeting the Cabinet Member raised significant concerns about the limited scope of the review and the Cabinet member followed up on this with a second letter to the Secretary of State.

COVID-19 and ethnicity

- 4.2.18 There are now multiple pieces of research that highlight a statistically significant difference in death rates in different ethnic groups. Although the difference between different ethnic groups is reduced when variables such as age, gender and deprivation are considered this does not remove all the differences and further research is needed to explore the reasons for the differences.
- 4.2.19 Government has launched a national review to analysis the risk factors associated with increased death rates, this includes but is not limited to ethnicity.
- 4.2.20 There is also evidence that the rate of death in BAME healthcare professionals is higher than white British counterparts and the NHS is doing further work to review this. Currently there is not an analysis of deaths in social care staff.

- 4.2.21 This pandemic has clearly exposed the links between inequality experienced across race, class, gender, disability and age. It has highlighted 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.
- 4.2.22 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.
- 4.2.23 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 this issues and have and will be participating in a number of national and regional reviews to explore the impact of COVID-19 on our BAME communities.

Public Health Division

- 4.2.24 The Public Health Division have been leading on supporting the City to respond effectively to the challenges and have been leading on messaging and ensuring our communities are supported during these challenging times including:
- 4.2.25 Public Health is developing the approach to local test and trace response to support complex situation outbreaks and vulnerable people.
- 4.2.26 Public Health has been working closely with Adult Social Care and the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide Enhanced Support for Care homes.
- 4.2.27 Public Health have commissioned a series of health and wellbeing at home videos, these are now published on the HealthyBrum YouTube channel
- 4.2.28 Public Health are finalising the award of the contracts for community partners to help support deeper engagement with specific communities in Birmingham.
- 4.2.29 Public Health have commissioned a YouGov Panel survey to capture a snapshot of health and wellbeing behaviours during COVID-19 which will report in 2 weeks time.
- 4.2.30 Public Health are running a survey of citizens health and wellbeing during COVID-19, this launched ahead of the Bank Holiday weekend. The survey can be accessed at via the BeHeard website.
- 4.2.31 We are currently commissioning more in-depth ethnographic research of the experiences of citizens during COVID-19 through the FinditBirmingham portal.
- 4.2.32 Engagement meetings have been held with Faith communities, African and Caribbean community members, Women's organisations and groups of young people.

- 4.2.33 Further detailed analysis is looking at the deaths during the last two weeks of April to explore the increase in all causes deaths, looking at the information available through the death certificates.
- 4.2.34 Further analysis is looking at the correlations between the Medium Super Output Area data reported by ONS to explore the variation between these geographies. Initial exploration suggests the highest numbers are reported in areas with Care Homes and the overall numbers in each area are small.
- 4.2.35 A survey of funeral directors is planned to try and capture information on faith and deaths.

Test and Trace

- 4.2.36 Public Health will be supporting the delivery of Test and Trace (TT) to support the government's published COVID-19 recovery strategy which includes the use of TT needed to ease social restrictions. The aim of TT is to rapidly identify and isolate people with COVID-19 symptoms and those who have been in close contact with them just before their symptoms started and the first days of illness. The isolation of cases and their contacts will have the largest impact in preventing spread. Individuals identifying through the App, NHS website or helpline will be directed to testing via the regional hubs (Edgbaston) or sent a postal kit and told to self-isolate (along with household) while awaiting the test result. Test results are expected within 48hrs of the test being received at the lab.
- 4.2.37 There is some debate about the size of the local hub to respond, the current discourse suggests on a population of circa 1 million, this would see Birmingham stand alone, however there is appetite for this to map onto Sustainability Transformation Programme (STP) footprints.

5. Education and Skills

5.1 Schools

- 5.1.1 On Friday 20th March 2020, the UK Government announced that all schools in England should partially close until further notice due to Coronavirus, remaining open only to priority groups of pupils: children of key workers, vulnerable children who couldn't be kept safe at home, and children with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). The majority of schools in Birmingham have continued to operate to accommodate these groups, with many schools remaining open during school holidays and over Bank Holiday weekends.
- 5.1.2 During this time, the Council has kept in daily contact with schools and headteachers, working with schools to support local communities and

provide online learning resources through their websites, as well as a wider wellbeing offer to families. Where schools have closed, the Council has provided a key brokerage services for the families of key workers, signposting them to hubs and alternative school provision in their area.

Free School Meals

- 5.1.3 Following the closure of schools to most pupils, and whilst awaiting further details on the launch of the national free school meals voucher scheme, Birmingham City Council acted proactively to support our most vulnerable families by issuing two week's worth of vouchers to approximately 61,000 children across the city entitled to free school meals. These vouchers were administered through schools, and could be used by families over the Easter holiday period.

Monitoring attendance of vulnerable pupils

- 5.1.4 Attendance across all school settings has been monitored daily, particularly the attendance of vulnerable children. The Council issued a return for schools to complete each week with information on the attendance of vulnerable children and details of the measures put in place for those who were not attending.

Hub provision for Bank Holidays

- 5.1.5 To ensure adequate provision over Bank Holiday weekends, the Council has monitored demand and arranged for a small number of schools to open as local hubs, brokering provision for families who were unable to find services in their area.

Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to schools

- 5.1.6 Birmingham City Council is currently offering PPE to all 27 Birmingham special schools. The type and quantity of PPE supplied is based on risk assessments carried out by individual schools around personal care, feeding and other required interventions where the recommended 2 metres social distancing cannot be observed.
- 5.1.7 National guidance is that mainstream schools require PPE for:
- Children, young people and students whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs
 - Situations where a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of Coronavirus while in their setting, needs direct personal care until they can return home, a distance of 2

metres cannot be maintained and contact with the child or young person is necessary

- 5.1.8 With regards to the second scenario, BCC will provide “starter” PPE packs for mainstream schools to enable re-opening in line with national advice. These packs will include masks, gloves, aprons and visors.

Early Years – Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Sector

- 5.1.9 It has emerged that under the Government’s job retention scheme, the financial sustainability of nurseries in the PVI sector is seriously at risk. These institutions are providing a vital service for parents and thus on 12th May 2020 the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture and Leader of Leeds City Council wrote to the Secretary of State for Education to asking for urgent clarification on the position.

Phased reopening of schools and early years settings

- 5.1.10 On Sunday 10th May, the Prime Minister announced that restrictions on education and school settings would begin to lift as the country came out of lockdown. National guidance is that, from the 1st June (at the earliest):
- Nurseries and other early year providers, including childminders, should begin welcoming back all children
 - Primary schools should welcome back children in nursery (where they have them), reception, years 1 and 6
 - Secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges should begin some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils.
- 5.1.11 Birmingham City Council has been clear that we support schools and early years settings opening to more pupils but only when it is safe to do so. We know how valuable regular attendance at school is, particularly for the most vulnerable but these education settings must be safe for pupils and staff. A statement that sets out this position was sent to schools, trades unions, councillors, MPs and published on the BCC website on Tuesday 19th May.
- 5.1.12 On 21st May a survey was sent to all headteachers asking them to advise on their plans for reopening.
- 5.1.13 Academies are being supported separately through the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Schools risk assessments

- 5.1.14 As part of the phased reopening of education settings, our schools are undertaking risk assessments to ensure that all necessary safety measures are put in place, welcoming more children back to schools only where it is safe to do so. We are supporting school leaders with this very important and complex process, and have produced a comprehensive risk assessment document for them to use that incorporates all aspects of national government guidance. We are acutely aware that some schools, particularly larger schools, may need additional time to put the right safety measures in place.
- 5.1.15 Our schools are all very different, and headteachers will need to consider their individual layouts and built environments to ensure that they can enforce safe social distancing for pupils and staff. We trust that headteachers will make the right decisions for their school communities. No school leader wants their school to be closed for longer than is absolutely necessary, but all will put the safety of their pupils and staff first when deciding when their school can open to more children.
- 5.1.16 As part of the risk assessment process, some schools have raised concerns about the implications on staff and pupils from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. In addition, many schools will be assessing the risk to pupils and staff with underlying medical conditions. In response, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture wrote to the Secretary of State for Education on Tuesday 19th May to highlight the concerns of BAME communities and request a copy of the scientific data supporting the government decision to reopen schools.

5.2 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 5.2.1 During the lockdown focus has been on ensuring our most vulnerable are protected and that our SEND service continues to reach out and support our children and young people and their parents and carers. We are working in extremely challenging times and supporting those with additional needs has never been more critical.
- 5.2.2 Our local offer website is being continually updated as our children's wellbeing remains our key priority and communicating this to our children, families and carers has been critical in order to support them. The local offer website provides latest information and advice, frequently asked questions, tips and links to useful websites and resources.

Special Schools

- 5.2.3 Over this time most of our special schools have remained open. The advice from government continues to be that the safest place for children, including those with an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan, is at home. The Assistant

Director for SEND and the Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing (and other officers of the Council when necessary e.g. Justin Varney) have held weekly meetings with all the Special Schools Headteachers to offer support and share issues that have arisen during this time. These meetings have worked extremely well and will be one of many things that we will look to continue post lockdown.

- 5.2.4 For a small number of children, headteachers have undertaken a risk assessment and following discussion with their families, they have decided that school is the best place for them to meet their needs. The City Council provided home to school transport for these children and providing vehicles that allow for social distancing.
- 5.2.5 Regular contact continues to be made with schools to provide advice and support to school staff around access to the pupils learning and resources, as well as support for the EHCP Annual Review process, where appropriate.
- 5.2.6 Our specialist advisory teacher services team of specially trained teachers are offering a range of advice and ideas to support children and families at home. This includes help with managing schoolwork at home, supporting children to understand what is happening and advice on coping with new routines.
- 5.2.7 A specialist technical service has continued to run, supporting families and schools with ensuring children have access to their assistive technology and equipment.
- 5.2.8 The teams are maintaining links with health and social care to ensure families, children and young people receive the right support and guidance when they need it.
- 5.2.9 Support from all aspects of the service is also now focusing in on planning for children's transition back into schools and settings as well as into their new schools and settings in September, where appropriate.
- 5.2.10 There have been some issues that we have been supporting schools including:
 - increased anxiety around transition / re-opening of school. Responding to parental concerns around supporting children with medical conditions and how they return to school safely.
 - there are anxieties about the use of PPE for certain children and how to keep staff safe
 - working with social care, health and police to support safeguarding concerns.

Virtual School – Children in Care

- 5.2.11 Our virtual school has:

- Worked with social workers and designated teachers to sign off that all children in care have an up to date education plan to reflect the education offer since closure.
- Communicated advice on the attendance codes to record on official registration certificates for all schools that have Birmingham children
- Reported IT access data and current use/demand to the Trust to prioritise delivery of laptops through the DfE scheme.
- Identified 20 – 30 vulnerable Year 6 Children in Care pupils who will be invited to participate in a virtual pupil transition support group with art therapy as a medium. The group will meet July through August and through to September although dates will be adjusted based on national recovery plans for schools.
- Continued to respond to queries and ongoing support for social care colleagues, schools and carers, as well as working on individual pupil cases and supporting young people into a school place or hub if they have recently moved care placement.

Home to School Transport

- 5.2.12 The number of schools open has remained constant, this will increase from June as more primary settings open to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. The team are currently reviewing available vehicle capacity to ensure the service can maintain social distancing guidelines when schools re-open and are able to give appropriate advice schools beforehand.
- 5.2.13 Our National Express Assisted Travel service as of 14th May have been supporting the delivery of food parcels to our shielded communities which have been in excess of 4000 most weeks.

Supporting our SEND families

- 5.2.14 The Assistant Director for SEND and the Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing have also regularly had teams meeting with our Parent Partnership group and this has been really 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.
- 5.2.15 The SEND Parent Link contact line is up and running to respond to queries or concerns and signpost to the relevant professional for help and supporting in meeting needs.

Education Health and Care Plans

- 5.2.16 Over this period, we are working hard to keep the Education Health and Care (EHC) process moving and we will continue to review this. Assessments for an

EHCPs are looking different as it has been not possible to work face-to-face. The service is doing more by telephone or video calls, where possible and our decision-making panels have moved to online meetings.

Temporary Legislative Changes

5.2.17 On Friday 1st May 2020 the Government announced temporary changes Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. The temporary legislative changes up until the 25th September initially gives local authorities, health commissioning bodies, education settings and others who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by COVID-19. No changes have been made to Annual Reviews, appeals and schools admitting children.

5.2.18 There are two main changes to 'SEND duties'

Change 1: A new exemption to the 20-week EHC timescale will be permitted due to issues relating to Coronavirus.

In Birmingham, as far as possible we will still attempt to deliver all EHC assessments within the 20-week timescale. Determining which EHC assessments will be exempt from the 20-week timescale will be made on a case by case basis.

Change 2: The duty to secure or arrange special educational provision and health care provision in EHC plans is temporarily modified to a duty to use 'reasonable endeavours' to do so.

In order to understand the reasonable endeavour duty further the local authority is holding virtual briefings with settings, schools and colleges. All other duties within SEND legislation remain in place.

5.2.19 The City Council are clear that the current changes to the SEND legislation and any exemptions for timescales will only be used in extreme situations. The authority aims to continuing to work to the 20-week framework for EHCP assessments and the issue of plans.

5.2.20 Over this period we have experienced a number of challenges in SEND:

- PPE guidance and equipment have been challenging over recent weeks. Public health and City Council have worked closely with head teachers to provide the necessary equipment to ensure children and the workforce remain safe in our special schools.
- Staff well-being has been raised as an area of concern.
- Supporting schools with risk assessments and social distancing as schools begin to re-open.

5.3 Birmingham Children's Trust

- 5.3.1 Our Children's Trust and especially our frontline social workers have very swiftly adapted working practices and staff across the Council and have responded remarkably well to ensure our vulnerable children are safe during COVID-19 lockdown. There have been lots of innovative and imaginative practices which have ensured that social workers have maintained contact with our vulnerable children to ensure they are safe, well and supported during these unprecedented times.

Initial phase of lockdown

- 5.3.2 Over the last few months the Trust has sustained contact with all the children open to it. The Trust has introduced a visiting policy which clearly sets out the need to regularly risk assess need and risk for every child and family open to the Trust. This includes children who are open to family support, children in need, children subject to child protection plans, children in care and care leavers. During this time, in line with Government guidance, staff have been deployed wherever possible to work from home.
- 5.3.3 A freephone line was quickly established whilst buildings and offices have been closed for vulnerable families or partners agencies as a point of contact if unable to contact the allocated worker during normal working hours.
- 5.3.4 The Trust has adapted to the current lockdown restrictions by introducing creative ways of managing day to day business through introducing virtual meetings, reviews, conferences and visits and ensuring that families are equipped with ICT equipment to ensure the Trust can maintain close contact. The Trust has repurposed a short break children's home as a registered mainstream home to increase sufficiency.
- 5.3.5 The Trust risk assessed all cases that are in pre-proceedings and care proceedings and the Trust is working with the court users to prioritise hearings for those children where the Trust need to take urgent action. New reporting platforms have been created to analyse performance, risk and the sufficiency position during COVID-19. In order to quality assure an online weekly audit programme is completed by all senior managers from Heads of Service to the Trust's Chief Executive.
- 5.3.6 During this period the Trust has successfully moved to virtual panels for both fostering and adoption. Hardship allowances have been introduced for foster carers and connected carers to ensure continued placement support. All children approaching 18 have had reviews to assess and support options for placement continuity. There has been the introduction of placement "hampers" to provide essential supplies for young people entering care.
- 5.3.7 The Trust has undertaken research with families, carers, Independent Review Officers and social workers to understand the impact of virtual reviews.

- 5.3.8 A Resource Hub was quickly created at the Trust's Newtown office that provides support and resources to the most vulnerable families. Up until mid-May the Trust had already supported 700 plus families through this hub.

Supporting Trust staff

- 5.3.9 To support staff, new policies and guidance have been created so staff understand their roles and responsibilities during COVID-19, specifically contact guidance, visiting guidance and attendance at school guidance. A daily communications bulletin is sent out to all staff, so everyone is kept up to date with news. Hosting regular staff forums and wellbeing sessions for staff have been introduced. Staff are using virtual touchdown meetings to stay in touch, and they have found this helpful in strengthening and maintaining relationships with their colleagues. Specialised sessions have been convened for our staff around COVID-19 and domestic violence.

Supporting families and children during COVID-19

- 5.3.10 Staff have been using games to engage with children to break down barriers and direct therapeutic work has continued with these creative approaches. Supporting families creatively by purchasing items to ensure children are occupied at home. Sending cards to new families to introduce themselves prior to a video call. Sending interactive worksheets to carers or parents for children to complete prior to visits which allows staff to get an idea of lines of conversation, feelings and wishes before they call.
- 5.3.11 In order to support our children in care, children in need, those on Child Protection Plans and our care leavers the Trust have been able to secure 3770 laptops which will be distributed to those children and young people without access to their own individual computers / laptop in order to support them with their school / college work.

Early Help

- 5.3.12 A new multi-agency Early Help offer has been implemented, in partnership with Birmingham's Voluntary and Community Sector. Elements include hardship grants to families, resilience grants to community organisations, remote support to families and a new online and phone CAMH service for young people and young adults, KOOTH. This COVID-19 response, based on 10 localities across the city, will provide the foundation for a new, sustainable Early Help service across the city.

Partnership Working

- 5.3.13 Partnership working and support has been integral, and the Trust has several corporate parenting partners who have provided invaluable support over the past few months in contributions and food and essential item provision and distribution.

- 5.3.14 West Midlands Fire Service have also supported this work through beginning safe and well checks with care leavers and supporting them with fire prevention smoke alarms etc.
- 5.3.15 The Trust has worked closely with the residential sector to develop contingency placements to mitigate against the prospect of market failure.
- 5.3.16 The Trust has developed an infrastructure through which a rapidly growing base of commercial partners can contribute support to Children in Need, for example, Birmingham City Football Club has donated their surplus food stocks to the Trust resource hub for onwards distribution.
- 5.3.17 Moving forward the Trust is reflecting on early learning from COVID-19 activity and to see how they maintain the pace of change that they have seen in strategic and operational partnership working. This piece of work is being done with the University of Birmingham to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on social work practice.
- 5.3.18 The Trust continues to provide services to families that have 'No Recourse to Public Fund' (NRPF) status; this includes victims of domestic abuse. During this time a range of payment changes have been put in place to ensure families experiencing difficulties were able to receive their subsistence allowances and in some cases, workers have delivered cash to families as additional support. The Trust is reviewing the way payments are made and are looking at BACs transfers and pre-payment cards as an alternative to giro.

Reviewing working practice

- 5.3.19 As the government position on lockdown has slightly shifted, the Trust is now planning next steps. This includes reviewing attendance at court, face to face assessments of children and families, reintroducing staff to the workplace safely and acknowledging that for some months they may need an adapted method of supporting and protecting children and families through planning a mixed response to visits, some of which will be virtual. Many families are now feeling the strain of lockdown and this is impacting on family life. Risk assessments going forward will need to consider the duration of lockdown.
- 5.3.20 The Trust has identified those children and families whom they are particularly worried about – disabled children, isolated care leavers, NRPF, homeless families and children subject to pre-proceedings. For all these groups, where there are additional risk factors, the Trust has-ensured additional support packages, and these will continue.
- 5.3.21 Risk assessments relating to visiting continue to be dynamic, shared with partners and overseen by team managers. Providing practice guidance to staff on conducting virtual visits. During this time the Trust has provided children and families with access to mobile phones and internet access to ensure staff can keep in touch with children and families. Reviewing the breakdown of visit styles to reflect the needs of our children and families.

- 5.3.22 Differing approaches into Trust case work is being reflected in recording systems to identify the visit type – face to face, virtual and phone call. As a result, we are now able to report live data on visits. For example, during April 2020, 34% of visits were face to face, 46% were virtual and the remaining 20% were telephone visits.
- 5.3.23 The Trust has undertaken an audit of the quality of child protection visits and completed an audit on the quality and timeliness of strategy discussions. The Trust has reviewed through audit those children who are not attending education where we believe that they should be. The Trust is supporting encouraging these children into their education settings, and health visitors and local police have supported the Trust in this area.
- 5.3.24 The Trust's Chief Executive and the Director of Children's Services and their respective senior management teams have Microsoft Teams meetings on a weekly basis to discuss any children it is believed should be attending their educational setting. This meeting has now been extended to include police and health partners. Partner agencies are making direct contact with families to have conversations about safe return to school for some of those children.
- 5.3.25 The Trust has provided safeguarding guidance to schools in partnership with Birmingham City Council.
- 5.3.26 The Trust has not relaxed any of their statutory responsibilities relating to having contact with children and their families, although policy guidance has been developed on conducting remote meetings which are in place.
- 5.3.27 The vast majority of contact arrangements have been held remotely. The Trust is now reviewing the contact policy and making plans to reintroduce safe face to face contact wherever possible.

Challenges

- 5.3.28 Over the course of the pandemic Birmingham Children's Trust has experienced a number of challenges, as outlined in this section of the report.
- 5.3.29 The Trust is planning for an increase in referrals when schools return.
- 5.3.30 The Trust is in contact with the judiciary about the delay that will be caused to children where court hearings cannot progress.
- 5.3.31 Working through professional anxiety has increased, leading to lengthy phone calls and creating a further impact on time and emotional resources.
- 5.3.32 The Trust is seeing a steady increase in contacts and referrals to the Trust although these are not yet back to the usual rate. The Trust is seeing an increase in childhood mental ill health and hardship issues.
- 5.3.33 The costs relating to COVID-19 incurred by the Trust amount to approximately £1.5m to date. The estimate of costs across the period of lockdown 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 costs are reasonable. The Trust has not incurred significant staffing costs as the workforce has been resilient in terms of sickness levels and our ability to redeploy staff.

- 5.3.34 Support to care leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has been put in place including hardship payments. The Trust has also put in place arrangements to support and expand adoption and fostering carers. The cost of working from home has also required the Trust to provide some modest investment in IT equipment.
- 5.3.35 The Trust is supporting staff to sustain the new ways of working to ensure stability of its workforce to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children open to the Trust.

5.4 Youth Service

- 5.4.1 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.

5.5 Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES)

- 5.5.1 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.
- 5.5.2 Throughout the lockdown we have continued to monitor the impact on learner recruitment and attendance, and are pleased to report that we now have the highest number of online courses/enrolments in England in the adult skills sector. Since April 2020, we have had 3641 learners enrolling on courses, of whom 1000 are ESOL learners.
- 5.5.3 Between April and May 2020 we offered 342 new online courses in response to COVID-19, and will offer a further 237 new courses after the Summer half-term (June/July 2020). This equates to a potential 1659 new additional enrolments, and includes courses in Health and Social Care, Arts, ICT, and Business. In terms of student support, teams are continuing to

offer support and guidance to learners online, through the BAES website, social media and videoconferencing/video-calling software.

Student support and outreach

- 5.5.4 The Careers, Education, Information, Advice & Guidance (CEIAG) and Work-Related Experience (WREXA) teams are offering 1:1 support to all BAES learners online, and a Learner Dashboard is available on the BAES website, providing free advice and guidance to all new, existing and potential learners. Learner Support Coordinators (LSCs) are providing daily drop-in and chat sessions to support the most vulnerable in the community, including ESOL students, and those who feel isolated or lonely. Students are being signposted by all teams to the online Community Hub on Moodle.
- 5.5.5 The Employment Access Team continues to support unemployed local residents across the City working with employers and training providers to ensure that vacancies are identified, progression pathways are developed and residents are matched to opportunities linked to procurement and planning powers. The service is fully operational via telephone and video calling. In this way both the World of Work and Youth Promise Plus projects continue to deliver one to one support and connect individuals to upskilling, jobs and apprenticeship opportunities.
- 5.5.6 Information will be accessible on Moodle to link to the free courses available across the West Midlands and jobs specifically relevant to COVID-19 and people re-purposed under furlough, e.g. NHS/Care Assistants/ Supermarkets/Delivery drivers. The information will be relevant for existing BAES learners and the wider community.

Brasshouse Translation and Interpreting Services (BTIS)

- 5.5.7 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 meaning a level of continuity has been provided on service delivery and clients being able to work with their usual interpreters.
- 5.5.8 Translation provision also continues. In April we completed the translation of COVID-19 key messages for BCC into Bengali, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian and Urdu. Other translations have included an information leaflet on staying safe online, correspondence, social worker documents and court bundles. Languages have included French, German, Polish, Pushto, Somali, Vietnamese and Urdu Pushto.

Post-lockdown learning

- 5.5.9 There are no plans at present to move back to face-to-face learning in buildings within the 2019/20 academic year.
- 5.5.10 Plans are in progress for July/August 2020 to open some buildings to cater for initial assessment/interviews and related recruitment processes which cannot be conducted remotely – there will be increased opportunities for remote enrolment and admissions processes perhaps as much as 90% of the intake. This period will also be used, on a case-case basis, to cater for face-to-face activities such as sitting of public exams, bespoke learning programmes or providing a safe and resourced place for learners to learn where personal circumstances make this difficult or impossible.
- 5.5.11 A revised 'COVID-19' curriculum offer for 2020/21 was published online on 15th June 2020. This revised offer takes a 'mix and match' approach, with a mix of online-only courses, face to face learning courses, and blended courses. Curriculum content and skills attainment have been reviewed to meet economic and community recovery plans in response to changing landscape and actual/projected rise in unemployment rates, workforce upskilling priorities, enterprise and building pathways to higher level jobs and sector growth areas.
- 5.5.12 All planning has the health and safety of all staff and learners as the paramount concern – each centre will have a risk assessment and will only open in accordance with BCC, DfE and central government guidance. We are working in conjunction with relevant colleagues and teams in the council to this end. We are also developing a strategy for engaging and reassuring our learners and members of the public, and further down the line practical guidance will be shared on the use of the of the buildings to literally accommodate social distancing and safety protocol.

5.6 Birmingham Careers Service

- 5.6.1 Careers Service staff have been working from home for the duration of the lockdown, focusing 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 and text. Young people have been kept informed about local provision over the summer months, including college and training provider recruitment and enrolment, through the website and social media. We have also maintained contact with all schools, encouraging the referral of all year 11, 12 and 13 pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET.

5.7 Libraries

- 5.7.1 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 is closed – instead, we have seen a 111% rise in online demand for library membership, and library staff have been busy creating new online services and innovations designed to increase access to services continuing into post-lockdown.
- 5.7.2 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
- 5.7.3 Since lockdown over 6,266 eBooks and 2,569 e-audio books have been loaned.
- 5.7.4 The archive and collections team are exploring options to ensure that people’s experiences of the Coronavirus 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.
- 5.7.5 Officers are currently discussing a phased reopening strategy for library buildings. Before any building is reopened, risk assessments and consultation will be undertaken to ensure safety and social distancing requirements.

6. Communities

6.1. Rough Sleeping/Homelessness

- 6.1.1. On 26th March 2020, the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness, Luke Hall MP wrote to Local Authorities asking them to house every rough sleeper by the end of the coming weekend (29 March).

- 6.1.2. Birmingham had an official rough sleeper count, as at November 2019, of 52, and a range of existing commissioned services to support rough sleepers.
- 6.1.3. COVID-19 required immediate changes to existing working practices and the mobilisation of additional capacity. Day Centre provision closed, the existing dormitory night-shelter had to close, many services became accessible by 'telephone only', and services were stretched as staff were forced to self-isolate due to potential COVID-19 infection.
- 6.1.4. In response to the '*everyone in*' call, and reflecting local needs, a first phase of actions were put in place, including:
- Securing additional accommodation in a commercial hotel to provide additional capacity, the potential to allow for self-isolation and flexibility.
 - Establishment of an Emergency Housing Triage and advice service based at Washington Court, with a Housing Options Centre officer and staffing support, embedded with in Trident Reach, 7 days a week.
 - Pathway to address crisis needs of those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) who could be housed and given subsistence as a response to COVID-19.
 - Daily coordination call with West Midlands Police to respond to COVID-19 requirements to protect vulnerable on streets, support self-isolation and lockdown instructions
- 6.1.5. To date 69 people have been accommodated in the commercial hotel, 38 remain in situ. Work is being done to plan for the move-on of all residents, indicatively by end of May 2020. Housing advice delivered at Washington Court has now seen over 419 presentations since 31 March 2020. This has allowed outreach services to concentrate on those on the street, providing a focal point for presentations in a bid to maximise capacity in the system for accommodation.
- 6.1.6. Up to 88 single people deemed 'NRPF' have been accommodated and provided subsistence. Work is ongoing to determine status of all, and plan for future accommodation, work, status and support.
- 6.1.7. On the evening of 24 April 2020, two teams from Trident Reach carried out late-night outreach activity with a sweep of the City Centre and locations [determined by available] intelligence across the wider city. Four people were found bedded down in the City Centre and six outside of the city centre. These individuals were largely identified and known to services. This represented a significant reduction in rough sleepers relative to the figure prior to lockdown.
- 6.1.8. While guidance is awaited relating to the easing or ending of lockdown, we have been working with partners to plan the actions required to support the

successful move-on of people in temporary accommodation solutions, and the development of a 'new normal' for service delivery.

- 6.1.9. There are services and working practices established in response to COVID-19, that have been successful, and the intention is to sustain these going forwards, while ensuring all provision is aligned to new realities.
- 6.1.10. The Mayor of the West Midlands, and Cllr Thompson as Chair of the Members Advisory Group for the Homelessness Taskforce have written to government calling on support for the needs highlighted by COVID-19 and related responses, as well as highlighting the long-term need to prevent/design out homelessness.
- 6.1.11. Positive discussions have taken place with MHCLG and Dame Louise Casey, who is spearheading the government's response to rough sleeping on two fronts; firstly a review of whether government would achieve it's target for zero rough sleeping by 2024; and secondly to lead on the rough sleeping response to COVID-19. Birmingham will remain a key authority in enabling success on both fronts.
- 6.1.12. There continues to be a mild increase in the number of people coming through the Housing Options Centre via phone with cases generally as a result of relationship breakdowns. The numbers in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) has increased particularly for singles, as move-on is an issue.
- 6.1.13. There is sufficient emergency accommodation to cope with the current demand and moves to self-contained/longer term accommodation are still taking place at a slower rate due to a reduction in the number of properties available. This is also contributing to the rise in B&B numbers.

6.2. Housing Management

- 6.2.1 We have continued to provide support and advice to our tenants in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with regular updates outlining changes to key services, including information and posters in high and low rise blocks about how to use lifts safely and the social distancing measures which tenants needed to follow. This same information was also shared with other service areas across housing, including the Rents Service and Contact Centre so that verbal updates could be provided to any tenants in contact with these services.
- 6.2.2 The City Council website has also been updated when have been changes to the provision of service, and this has been supplemented by messages on social media using the Council channels. We have also carried out the following:
 - Weekly contact has been completed with approximately 5,000 tenants that live in our sheltered schemes. This has been supplemented with

face to face contact with any tenants requiring additional support. In a small number of cases food parcels have been organised for tenants that have underlying medical conditions, which has meant that due to self-isolating and a lack of any family support, they would have been unable to get essential provisions without the support from this service.

- The Rent Service has moved staff (temporarily) away from 'collection' activities to a more supportive role assisting tenants (especially vulnerable and those suffering financial hardship) to enable them to pay their rent during this period of cashflow difficulties. Officers have been contacting tenants slipping into rent arrears, with a view to offering sustainable, affordable arrangements together with appropriate signposting for debt advice and how to access the full range of the welfare system, including Universal Credit. Along with the advice and support offered to assist tenants to pay their rent they have also been successful in identifying other areas they can get support from which will help with their day to day living expenses.
- Support to all residents across Birmingham in receipt of the Careline Service has continued. This service is not only provided to older or vulnerable Birmingham City Council tenants but is also part of the care package for some residents that are supported by the Adults Directorate. A proactive approach has been taken with residents being contacted at regular intervals to ensure that they do not feel isolated and check whether any additional support is required.
- The Lettings Service is continuing to contact new tenants who have recently moved into their homes to ensure they are receiving the advice and support to help them sustain their tenancies.
- Tenant Participation Officers have maintained weekly telephone contact with current and past HLB members, and this has been supplemented with email updates when service delivery has changed, as has happened in the Repairs Service now that some non-essential repairs have started to be booked and completed. Feedback from tenants in this group has been very positive, and they feel that the housing service has provided a higher level of support than expected.
- The HLB communication route also includes local councillors that attend HLB meetings, and they have been appreciative of the information which has been provided particularly around the support which is available to all residents from third party organisations, and information cascaded through this network from the Children's Trust and Adults Directorate.

- The housing service has seen an increase in the number of complaints of domestic abuse over the last 6 weeks and resources have been moved around within the housing service to respond to this increase in demand so that these tenants are supported.

6.2.3 Across the rest of the housing service residents in tower blocks have been contacted when there has been a specific incident such as a fire or an increase in neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour complaints so that tenants are aware that the housing service is continuing to be provided and respond to any queries.

6.2.4 In addition to support for tenants Cllr Sharon Thompson, on behalf of the Local Authority, Housing Associations and Private Landlords in Birmingham, has sent a letter to Government calling for additional funds for renters of all tenures affected by COVID-19. In particular, funds to cover rent payments and specifically targeted for 'renters support' to Landlords where it is evidenced that tenants are at risk of losing their tenancies due to the current lockdown measures meaning they are unable to pay their rents.

6.3 Housing Repairs and Maintenance

6.3.1 The Repairs and Maintenance Service continues to prioritise emergency and urgent repairs including 1/2hr, 1,3, and 7-day repairs including statutory gas safety inspections.

6.3.2 Some routine repairs (30 days) are now being released that can be carried out in line with all the current Health and Safety requirements and social distancing. Contractors will contact each tenant individually to confirm a suitable appointment time. If for any reason the tenant would rather not have our contractor carry out the work during lockdown, and wishes to wait until normal service is resumed, then the contractor is informing the tenant that the job will be put back on hold. Typically, the jobs being released will be external works such as fencing, roofing, guttering and slabbing.

6.3.3 The feedback from contractors and customers has been positive and in line with the Government letter to social housing tenants we are working with the contractors over the coming week on how to resume business as usual with routine repairs and starting to engage with customers about carrying out capital works in customers' homes following safe working practices.

6.3.4 We have continued to undertake our capital investment work where safe to do so to ensure fire safety in our tower blocks. We are also continuing our work to provide the Government with information regarding the safety of high-rise residential accommodation in the private sector.

6.4 Housing Development/Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT)

- 6.4.1 Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) delivers long term residential development projects in the city, so immediate service implications for residents have been limited. However, the closure of BMHT's seven currently live sites for reasons of health and safety during the COVID-19 lockdown has resulted in an impact upon the overall programme which has seen over 3,000 new homes built since 2009.
- 6.4.2 Following a detailed review of current and planned site activity with contractors and Employers Agents the BMHT programme is forecast to have a 30% reduction in delivery against its capital budget in 2020/21. This is mainly due to the impact of COVID-19 stopping work on sites prior to the end of the last financial year. Some additional costs are likely to arise, but the extent of these are currently not detailed. Reasonable risk management which impacts on the pace of development will be taken into consideration, such as taking account of health and safety, distancing, travel to work, etc.
- 6.4.3 We are pushing forward with tenders and reports to ensure work can progress on site as we emerge from lockdown to further minimise the impact of current programme delays.

Contractor and BMHT Programme Delivery Support

- 6.4.4 Following the closedown of all BMHT sites, several contractors are now arranging their return to work on site, with some, advising that they anticipate operating at around 70-80% efficiency whilst maintaining COVID-19 secure safety measures. Our contractors have indicated they anticipate work to recommence from 1 June 2020 onwards
- 6.4.5 A Method Statement on their planned safe working protocols has been requested so that the council can be satisfied on compliance with Government guidance.
- 6.4.6 Contracts are being reviewed in a bid to avoid any charges for delays or other issues that arise purely due to the COVID-19 restrictions.
- 6.4.7 Greater flexibility is being applied in negotiations with developers to deal with the current situation.
- 6.4.8 We have pushed forward with tender evaluations and acceptance reports to ensure we can begin work on site as we emerge into a post COVID-19 environment. There may be some cost emanating from the need for additional supervision on sites initially, besides delays and impacts on material supplies and labour.

- 6.4.9 Design work continues to push forward on sites to ensure the impact and delays on the future build programme are minimised and we continue to work with Planning to progress sites.

Letting of new BMHT homes

- 6.4.10 Lettings are now taking place following the easing of restrictions and the relaunch of the Choice Based Lettings scheme, but with a slight lag due to the cycle needing to finish before applicants are shortlisted and then matched to properties.
- 6.4.11 BMHT is working with voids/lettings to ensure cases can move as soon as possible (subject to safe working practices).
- 6.4.12 Continued joint working with the Lettings Team is in place to ensure this activity can recommence in line with new government guidance.
- 6.4.13 Where lettings have not been possible, properties have been secured, and communication is ongoing with affected customers.
- 6.4.14 Where tenancies were signed prior to lockdown, but moves could not follow as planned, an arrangement has been made to pause the tenancy at no charge to the tenant, to prevent arrears building up.
- 6.4.15 Communication with residents are handled through the Council's website, and specific messages have been targeted to affected residents via email where possible.

Site security and management

- 6.4.16 Most of the Council's housing development sites are currently closed due to the COVID-19 restrictions, both for clearance and demolition activity and for house-building.
- 6.4.17 On clearance sites, security panelling is in place to avoid the risk of squatting or vandalism. Additional daily patrols are being made by caretakers, who attend the site by vehicle for visual inspections.
- 6.4.18 On some clearance sites an agreement has been reached with the demolition contractor for them to continue work to take down buildings, where safe working protocols can be adhered to. This is beneficial in removing safety hazards and security risks.
- 6.4.19 Development sites remain in the responsibility of our contractors during this period, who will maintain site security to ensure public safety.

6.5 Registry Office and Bereavement Services

- 6.5.1 COVID-19 has had a major impact on individuals, families and communities across the city. The registration and bereavement services has seen an

increase in demand and has continued to provide an excellent service during very challenging times and has responded to updated Government guidance.

- 6.5.2 The Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods together with Shabana Mahmood MP held discussions with Government Ministers in relation to the Coronavirus Bill and sought changes to proposals that Councils could determine if someone was cremated or buried. We ensured the views of Birmingham's residents were put across, particularly from a faith perspective, with the majority of the recommendations being incorporated into the Government Bill. We continued ongoing dialogue with Simon Clarke MP, Minister of State (Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government) and civil servants and the Council's communications team were invited to join dialogue with the government relating to best practice communication with faith communities. We have continued to discuss specialist training for those working within the service and sought clarity on burials. Some of the feedback provided from Birmingham was reflective in the latest guidance on burials and cremations, although further clarity is still required on social distancing and other measures.
- 6.5.3 Further calls were made to Government for additional funding to allow local authorities to pay for funeral costs of residents in receipt of benefits and for those awaiting receipt of universal credit, for those who are furloughed and are on low incomes and where there are multiple deaths in an immediate family.
- 6.5.4 We suggested an increase in the Bereavement Support Payment and removal of current restrictions to make it more widely available, such as the necessity to have paid National Insurance contributions for at least 25 weeks.
- 6.5.5 We currently do not charge for still births or the funerals of children under the age of 18.

Births

- 6.5.6 Birth registration appointments were initially deferred until the end of the lockdown period. Guidance was issued on 31st May 2020 indicating that birth registrations could once again take place, and appointments have now been reinstated with effect from 1st June 2020.
- 6.5.7 As at 31st May 2020, the backlog of birth registrations is nearing 5,000.

Citizenship Ceremonies

- 6.5.8 These have been cancelled until further notice in line with national policy and Birmingham Registration Service will update this information in due course.

Marriages and Civil Partnerships

- 6.5.9 Marriage and Civil Partnership ceremonies will no longer be undertaken in line with national policy.
- 6.5.10 Notices of Marriage and Civil Partnership will be deferred until the UK is through the current pandemic period.

Deaths and Still Births

- 6.5.11 The Coronavirus Act 2020 changed the death registration process, with electronic or telephone registration permissible. Demand has been high and changes have been made to the initial process, which has increased operational efficiency. This along with additional resources allocated has reduced waiting times for the registration- this is now down to around half a day or less for completed applications. The service is working with partners to ensure applications have all information more quickly.

Bereavement Services

- 6.5.12 In April 2,261 deaths were registered, just under 45% (1,015) COVID-19 related. In April 2019, 819 deaths were registered. In May 2020, 993 deaths were registered compared to 863 registrations in May 2019.
- 6.5.13 To help funeral directors with storage capacity, the City Council opened a temporary storage facility at Sutton New Hall cemetery. This is helping to ensure mortuaries at NHS hospitals are not full to capacity. This is being used to about 7% capacity at present, and it is intended it will be decommissioned in late June/ early July 2020.
- 6.5.14 Since 17 April the Regional Facility at Birmingham Airport has been in place which provides storage for over 3,500 deceased, the City Council holds the licence and overall responsibility for the management of the facility under the HTA licence. This is currently being reviewed but is planned to be in place until early September.

Funerals

- 6.5.15 The services are working to a plan taking into account the current pandemic. This inevitably involves changes to the ways funeral services are conducted.
- 6.5.16 Services will normally be a maximum of 30 minutes at this time and funeral directors are assisting with the rules about social distancing.
- 6.5.17 Initially, the City Council set a limit of six mourners as a result of early risk assessments - across all our burial sites and crematoria. Following new guidance from national government on 28th May that allows for more social interaction between different households, we have now reviewed our policies, including our approach to bereavement services and the number of people

allowed at funerals. From 1st June 2020, the number of mourners allowed to attend funerals has been increased from six to sixteen.

- 6.5.18 The City Council welcomes the filming and broadcasting of burials, which needs to be undertaken by prior arrangement through Funeral Directors. Webcasting (or the use of applications like Facetime Live) cremations may also be undertaken through prior arrangement with Funeral Directors.
- 6.5.19 The Council is offering the opportunity for memorial services to be held at a later date due to the emergency situation we are in. Any service would be held later in the year providing the emergency measures have been amended.
- 6.5.20 The increase in the number of funerals seen in March and April has now reduced and the additional staff redeployed have now been returned to normal work role. The number of funeral slots available are being varied in line with demand.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

- 6.5.21 The Secretary of State announced changes to the ways local authorities operate cemeteries on 18 April 2020. The City Council has continually reviewed its policy on opening and has increased the opening times of cemeteries and crematoria grounds each day after funeral services have concluded, to allow people to pay respects. The times of opening for individual sites may vary as the need for more burials becomes evident, with longer opening hours at weekends. This is being reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- 6.5.22 We maintain regular contact with Funeral Directors and Faith Group Leaders to ensure they are informed of all new policies related to COVID-19 and can relay this to families and communities:
 - We have circulated a newsletter with all the changes relating to COVID-19
 - We keep in touch with updates via regular email communication
 - We have weekly meetings with Faith leaders, where advice on bereavement services is also provided
 - We have held webinars and other online meetings to discuss new policies with faith groups

6.6 Community Safety

- 6.6.1 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 response to COVID-19.
- 6.6.2 Officers have continued to engage and work collaboratively with West Midlands Police to ensure safety in our communities. This ranges from environmental

health and trading standards officers assisting with inspection of premises that should not be operating to our park rangers encouraging people to observe social distancing guidelines in our green open spaces.

- 6.6.3 The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) has adopted a Gold/Silver/Bronze operating model during the pandemic.

Gold – Executive Board

- 6.6.4 The Executive Board acts as the Gold strategic lead and are meeting fortnightly. A delivery and communication plan is in place and the Board will be working with WM PCC and WM Police to support activities around organised crime groups and the increase in tensions playing out between gangs during the pandemic. A daily tension monitoring process is in place.
- 6.6.5 A Task & Finish group is developing a Recovery Plan and exploring what the “new normal” will look after COVID-19. This includes working with the Health & Wellbeing, Children and Adult Safeguarding to ensure our plans are fully aligned.

Silver – Operations Group

- 6.6.6 Silver – Operations Group (SOG) meets twice a week and identifies and manages anti-social behaviour, crime and community tension issues, including:
- COVID-19 breaches – West Midlands Police have reported that there have been over 2000 people dispersed within the West Midlands, 325 Fixed Penalty Notices issued and 18 Arrests.
 - A partnership process is in place to monitor non-compliance of Government legislation around self-isolation and social distancing.
 - We continue to work with partners outside BCSP structures for early identification and rapid solution of problems.
 - Links developed with Safer Travel and British Transport Police to monitor public transport following recent Government announcements.
 - Engaging and supporting mosques across the city to ensure clear, consistent community-led messaging around Eid/Chand Raath. This has strengthened and deepened our links with the community, ensured positive engagement and shaped the issuing of the new guidelines.
 - Ongoing engagement with the Chinese Community around hate crime.

- 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

- 6.6.7 All six partnerships meet each fortnight and continue to operate a Place and People focus.

Counter-Extremism

- 6.6.8 Over the course of the pandemic, we have worked with communities and partner agencies, including the West Midlands Police Counter Terrorism Unit (WM CTU) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), to develop awareness and responses to emerging COVID-19 issues and related hate crime and extremism considerations.
- 6.6.9 We have also continued to partner with domestic abuse providers to ensure that individuals and families remain safe during lockdown.
- 6.6.10 Recovery planning has now commenced, including work around genocide commemoration events and a counter-extremism engagement plan.

Prevent

- 6.6.11 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.
- 6.6.12 Channel Panel and Prevent governance meetings are now being held virtually.
- 6.6.13 The Prevent team are working closely with the Home Office and civil society organisations to ensure any disruption to project delivery is minimised. Civil society organisations are also developing and presenting workshops/sessions via webinar platforms as face to face delivery cannot be conducted during the current situation.
- 6.6.14 Civil society organisations have produced action plans and timetables of activity, which are being monitored to ensure delivery remains on target.
- 6.6.15 Schools Resilience Officer is working on the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) National Framework which is planned to be implemented in schools from September 2020.

Early release of prisoners

- 6.6.16 On 4th April 2020, national government announced its intention to temporarily release risk-assessed prisoners as part of the national plan to protect the NHS and save lives.
- 6.6.17 The City Council immediately called for a partnership approach given the size of Birmingham's exempt housing sector far exceeds those of other core cities, consisting of over 14000 units; the majority of which fall in a small number of high-density neighbourhoods of the city. More than 85% of these units serve over 10,000 clients placed into Birmingham through out of area placements. These include offenders, alongside other vulnerable communities such as care leavers, women fleeing domestic abuse, homeless singles and rough sleepers.
- 6.6.18 To date, of the 4,000 of individuals previously announced by government for early release, only one person has been rehoused in the city, with a local family connection and five across the region.

Domestic Abuse

- 6.6.19 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.
- 6.6.20 The importance of staying home to help stop the spread of COVID-19 has also meant those suffering domestic abuse are, as a result of the lockdown, spending more time with their perpetrators – with fewer opportunities to seek help.
- 6.6.21 No additional calls were received early lockdown. However, there has been a significant increase in the last couple of weeks. For example, Helpline calls rose from 75 calls on 30 March 2020 to 147 calls on 04 May 2020.
- 6.6.22 BSWAID extended its helpline's opening hours, so people can contact their specially trained team daily. For those unable to speak safely to operators, the charity is also piloting a local webchat service over the coming weeks through www.bswaid.org, where those in need can have a confidential web chat between 10am and 2pm on weekdays.
- 6.6.23 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.
- 6.6.24 The Shadow Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership is chaired by Cllr Nicky Brennan in her role as Cabinet Advisor on Domestic Abuse. The Cabinet

Member also sits on this Board. It is focused upon preparing and communicating the City's response in anticipation of the expected spike as lockdown measures are beginning to ease. This includes a parallel media campaign with the hashtag #NoExcuses.

- 6.6.25 Work has also commenced internally to ensure that the Council has robust arrangement in place to support our own staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse.
- 6.6.26 Dialogue has commenced with the government's national Domestic Abuse Commissioner, to explore creating a "model of excellence" for responses to domestic abuse. A performance and information dashboard and dataset is being prepared which will bring together data from across key agencies including the City Council telephone helplines, police, safeguarding bodies and the NHS.

6.7 Supporting our communities

Community engagement

- 6.7.1 The City Council established a communications and engagement plan to ensure that all communities across the city received up to date information relating to key government and council messages relating to COVID-19. Key messages were translated into the city's top 5 languages – Bengali, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian and Urdu and distributed amongst networks.
- 6.7.2 In addition to this work, the council is working with grass roots community organisations to help disseminate key information to marginalised communities that do not use traditional forms of communication. This ongoing engagement with community organisations and community activists has helped the council adapt our channels of communication to meet diverse needs. Moreover, the lockdown measures are impacting communities in different ways, so to help us better understand the difficulties and issues experienced as result of the measures, we are working with community organisations to gather community feedback to help shape our responses.

Recognising the importance of faith to communities

- 6.7.3 For the past two months, as a result of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, faith buildings have been closed to congregations, prayers and other acts of collective worship have been suspended and public facing faith events have been cancelled.

- 6.7.4 This has meant communities taking difficult decisions around religious events including Easter, Passover, Vaisakhi, Rama Navami and Eid during the period of the lockdown. It is highly likely that faith communities will continue to be affected as social-distancing measures remain in place and we seek to guard ourselves against a potential second wave of infection during the autumn and winter.
- 6.7.5 We are engaging with all of the city's faith communities about how we can help them to mark important religious festivals throughout the year, while restrictions remain in place.
- 6.7.6 The Council has held weekly virtual meetings with various faith groups and circulated guidance and key messages throughout the pandemic. We would like to extend our warmest thanks and gratitude to all of the city's faith communities for the contributions they are making to the wider community, while continuing to provide spiritual and pastoral care virtually to their congregations.

Community Centres

- 6.7.7 Across the city, Community Centres have evolved as venues for organisations seeking to hire rooms and facilities from which to deliver services to local people. The guidance from Government around COVID-19 in relation to social distancing meant that our regular groups and tenants began to cancel their bookings or withdraw their programmes. Instructions were issued by the Government on 20 March 2020 to close sports and leisure facilities, which resulted in all our directly managed Community Centres being closed to the public as of 22 March 2020.
- 6.7.8 Despite being closed to the general public, the service has supported those organisations that wished to continue offering services to the community from our Centres:
- The Ladywood Health and Community Centre has provided a base for an emergency food distribution centre, paid for by the Council and operated by The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) and Fare Share. Up to 40 tonnes of supplies a week have been stored and packed on site then distributed to vulnerable people via charitable and community groups, and the service has staffed the site for 7 days a week from 07.00 to 21.00 including bank holidays and weekends.
 - This operation has complemented the Junk Food Kitchen project already running three days a week on site, distributing up to 150 food parcels a day to local residents in need, with a sister project running at Kings Heath Community Centre.

- Burbury Park Centre has been made available to Silver Birch school, catering for children with Behavioural, Emotional, and Social Difficulties (BESD)

- 6.7.9 The service has stood ready to support other Council services and has offered local distribution points for PPE for social care workers; and venues to the Children's Trust for the payment of emergency hardship payments to vulnerable families, in case these are required in future. Three Centres are also designated Emergency Rest Centres and we will re-open buildings as required for this purpose or if needed as any other part of the specific emergency response to COVID-19.
- 6.7.10 The closure to the public as instructed by the Government has resulted in a loss of all income from fees and charges, room hire and function bookings – income on which the service business model depends. Required social distancing measures mean that, even when allowed to re-open, the Centres will not be able to operate at full capacity and the service is likely to be financially impacted by COVID-19 for the foreseeable future. It is anticipated that the recovery phase will place even greater demands on the facilities as the need for the social/welfare support and broader wellbeing activities that are normally provided from our Centres will only intensify.

Birmingham Pride

- 6.7.11 Due to the current restrictions, the City Council and Birmingham residents supported a virtual version of Birmingham Pride over the May Bank Holiday (Sun 24 May) with online performances and special guests streaming live on Facebook, [Twitter](#) and YouTube. This also include video messages of support from various guests – including Councillors, Cabinet Members and other civic leaders supporting the message that in Birmingham we are 'stronger together'.
- 6.7.12 Event organisers have announced that the next Birmingham Pride is now being planned for May 2021.

Migration

- 6.7.13 Throughout March and April 2020, Public Health and Adult Social Care colleagues were involved in developing guidelines with the Home Office and Public Health England colleagues on COVID-19 guidance for asylum hostels and hotels, to ensure that those in and around the units in Birmingham remain safe and well. Graeme Betts, Acting Chief Executive, wrote to the Home Office to seek confirmation from the Home Office that they would put the necessary measures in place.

- 6.7.14 The Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities has also written to the Home Office to express concern over the digital isolation of asylum seekers in initial and dispersed accommodation in the city, as well as to recommend that the Home Office increases support payments, which are currently significantly lower than the level of Universal Credit.
- 6.7.15 We have mobilised partners in the Preventing Crisis Enabling Integration project to engage with individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) who are currently in temporary accommodation. This will support them in seeking a better legal status to allow them to access Public Funds coming out of this crisis. This work is funded through our Controlling Migration Fund grant from central government.
- 6.7.16 The Leader of the Council has also written to Ministers requesting that Government suspends the No Recourse to Public Funds conditions, during the pandemic. It is estimated that there are currently 1000 families in the city with NRPF supporting 3000 children. These children and families are at high risk of falling through the gaps into abject poverty as they are unable to access vital benefits.

The voluntary sector response

- 6.7.17 The Council continues to work with the city's voluntary sector umbrella body, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, to create a coordinated community response to the Coronavirus outbreak following a huge number of offers of community support from across the city during the pandemic.
- 6.7.18 The City Council has ensured that voluntary and community organisations across the city are regularly updated regarding any external funding for COVID-19 Response. We have identified both the key Council strands of community funding for Children and Families and Vulnerable Adults and the main external funders.
- 6.7.19 The City Council has commissioned some research and analysis relating to Birmingham's community sector response to COVID-19. This will focus on areas such as impact, transition and recovery and how the key issues and learning can be aligned with the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper moving forward.
- 6.7.20 A series of interviews with 26 small and medium sized VCSs, are due to take place in June. This will be crucial to deliver the Council's work with community organisations following the pandemic.
- First strand - response of the community/voluntary sector to the crisis, and how our relationship with the sector needs to change going forward

- Second strand - looking at the differential impact of COVID-19 on different communities (BME, place, deprivation)

6.7.21 Finally, we have started virtual Ward Forum meetings in compliance with government guidance.

Differential impact of COVID-19 across the city

6.7.22 This pandemic has clearly exposed the links between inequality experienced across race, class, gender, disability and age. It has highlighted 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.

6.7.23 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.

6.7.24 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. Cabinet Members and officers will be providing evidence to the various national reviews being undertaken on the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities.

7. Street Scene and Parks

7.1. Waste Management

7.1.1. From the initial stages of the lockdown to the present day all the Council's waste management teams have shown considerable resilience and commitment and we have consequently consistently maintained all our regular collection services, something that has clearly bucked the national trend.

7.1.2. Initially it had been thought that it might be necessary as to co-mingle garden waste with recycling to maintain the service, but to date it has not been necessary to do this and separate recycling and garden waste collections are being maintained. The street cleansing service has been maintained and where it has been required a few individuals have assisted with refuse collection. Crews have otherwise operated as normal whilst also concentrating on areas of fly-tipping.

7.1.3. As stated, maintaining this level of service has only been possible with the dedicated commitment from our crews, achieved through close cooperation of our Trades Union colleagues recognising that as key workers there was a need

to flex working practices to maintain the service whilst ensuring the health and safety of our workforce. The resultant effect has been clear for all to see with an unprecedented level of support and messages of appreciation received by the crews from members of the public.

- 7.1.4. This concerted effort has not gone without some challenges and some roads on some occasions have been dropped, although as at the time of writing the total number of roads that remain 'dropped' across the whole city is 10 and this out of a total of 12,250 collected from in any given week. Depots have reported that the main underlying reason for these dropped roads is down to access issues brought about through inconsiderate parking.
- 7.1.5. Whilst we have, for now, suspended new subscriptions to the garden waste collection service, online bookings for bulky waste collections were re-opened from 4 May and on 7 May four out of our five Household Waste Recycling Centres were re-opened following updated guidance on essential journeys from the Government. Essential road works and temporary traffic lights by the HWRC in Castle Bromwich meant that this HWRC could not be opened on 7 May however, it is anticipated that it will re-open on 8 June. The re-opening of the remaining HWRCs has as predicted generated significant challenges for the Waste Service, Veolia, HWRC users, local businesses, residents and the Police. The measures that had to be put in place by Veolia to ensure that the required social distancing rules on site were maintained coupled with a large number of visits that could clearly be identified as non-essential created unprecedented queues at each of the HWRCs often reaching a maximum queuing time of 3 hours. In mitigation queuing time signs have been placed on the highway (similar to those used at theme parks) and a consistent message across the press and social media about residents only taking essential waste has been maintained and reinforced. In those messages it has also been stressed that only Birmingham residents can use our sites and proof of residence is required before entry is allowed. Some minor adjustments were made to traffic signals in Sutton Coldfield to try to slow the flow of traffic towards the Norris Way site, but these have not had a major impact because of the sheer volume.

7.2 Parks and Grounds Maintenance

- 7.2.1 Throughout the lockdown daily checks, safety inspections and essential works have been carried out and parks patrolled to ensure social distancing. Car parks at the major parks have remained open throughout and whilst the vast majority of residents/park visitors are observing social distancing guidelines there have been a few issues reported to parks management and apart from one isolated incident which required police attendance were resolved by parks staff engaging in dialogue. Use of the Council's street advertising columns is being

made to reinforce the messaging about social distancing and no group activities in parks and as at the time of writing Parks remain closed for events. This messaging around social distancing has recently been backed up by the introduction of mowing 2-metre-wide strips in all our parks, something that has been welcomed and recognised nationally as good practice.

- 7.2.2 In the interest of the safety of road users grass cutting on highways commenced in mid-April to ensure clear sight lines at junctions as did grass cutting at sheltered housing schemes and cemeteries Grass cutting in parks commenced on 11 May with the approach described above to reiterate the importance of maintaining social distance following the updated guidance published by Government.
- 7.2.3 At the outset of lockdown all the Council's playgrounds and courts have been closed and locked with notices displayed explaining the reason. Unfortunately, many of the laminated information posters are being removed by persons unknown and some courts and playgrounds have been accessed despite closure and notices being in place. Despite the Government's announcement that tennis courts and ball courts could now be used the decision has been taken locally for them to remain closed as they remain the subject of large gatherings and no social distancing.

8 Transport

- 8.1 COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown restrictions have had a huge impact on transport and travel patterns worldwide.
- 8.2 In Birmingham, traffic reduced to a third of usual levels and public transport services focused on getting key workers to their workplaces while maintaining social distancing. With schools largely closed and thousands of employees working from home, the school run and the commute to work reduced significantly. These dramatic changes gave us a downward trend in air pollution, with NO2 levels falling within legal limits at key monitoring stations.
- 8.3 At the same time, people began walking and cycling more, exploring their local area. People who were not previously cycling regularly are now using bikes on a daily basis.

8.4 Early Action

- 8.4.1 As lockdown began, the immediate priority was to ensure key workers could continue to travel to work. Secondary to this was ensuring that other essential trips could be made safely.

8.5 Public transport

8.5.1 The emergency response on public transport was co-ordinated by TfWM, and included:

- Enhanced cleaning regimes for vehicles and stops/stations.
- Reduced public transport timetables to align with reduced demand. First and last services on all modes were retained to accommodate shift patterns.
- Additional shuttle bus services provided between key interchanges/park & ride sites and hospitals.
- Free travel on bus and metro agreed for all NHS employees (ending 30th June 2020).
- Removal of time restrictions for concessionary pass use (ending 31st May 2020).
- Funding from Government to support operators to continue providing a service despite drastically reduced income from fares.
- In addition, existing season ticket holders were able to cancel Direct Debits and apply for refunds on travel passes they were not using during lockdown.

8.6 Parking

8.6.1 We closed several Council run car parks, leaving Snow Hill multi storey and all surface car parks open. All pay and display parking charges, on and off street were suspended.

8.7 Road safety

8.7.1 Citizens were urged to drive carefully and to avoid the temptation to speed on the much quieter road network.

8.8 Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan

8.8.1 On 9th May 2020, the Secretary of State for Transport announced a £2 billion package to support active travel to help the country emerge from the Coronavirus crisis, of which £250 million is for swift, emergency interventions to make cycling and walking safer. On 11th May 2020, the Government published a national COVID-19 recovery strategy, setting out the conditions for easing

lockdown and the steps that will be taken in England to enable more activities to take place whilst continuing to control the spread of COVID-19.

8.8.2 We responded with the publication of an Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan, setting out the short, medium and longer-term actions Birmingham can take to enable a low carbon, clean air recovery from COVID-19. This emergency plan builds on the draft Birmingham Transport Plan published for consultation in January 2020, incorporating learning from the Coronavirus crisis and reframing our vision for Birmingham's transport networks in the context of recovery. This is especially important considering the potential impact of social distancing restrictions on the use of public transport, and the danger that we will see a 'modal shift' back towards the use of private vehicles.

8.8.3 In the emergency plan, we set out our intentions to bring forward programmes and individual schemes in line with the four 'big moves' outlined in the draft Birmingham Transport Plan:

- **Reallocating road space**

With finite road space (including footways) available, we will seek to allocate more space to walking and cycling to support people to use these modes, along with the need for social distancing. We will not allocate space away from public transport (buses) and will also seek opportunities to introduce bus priority measures where needed.

- **Transforming the city centre**

The traffic cells initiative described in the draft Birmingham Transport Plan seeks to reduce the dominance of cars, create safe spaces for walking and cycling and prioritise public transport. This approach is highly appropriate to the COVID-19 recovery plan to create more space for active travel, social distancing and potentially spill-out business activity as economic activity in the city centre increases and some hospitality venues are permitted to reopen.

- **Prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods**

During lockdown, active travel in local neighbourhoods has been widely adopted for permitted exercise and trips to local shops. The opportunity to convert this to long term behaviour change cannot be missed.

Already, we have created more space for people in Kings Heath and Erdington through the removal of some on street parking, and this has been well received by the local community.

20mph speed limits can play an important role in making local streets safer for walking and cycling and we want to make 20mph the default speed limit in residential streets and local centres in Birmingham. To do this will require a change in legislation from the Government, and we have written to the Secretary of State for Transport to make the case for such a change. If this cannot happen, the alternative will be a continued gradual roll out, but this will take longer, and incur significantly higher expenditure.

- **Managing demand through parking measures**

In the context of social distancing, on-street parking can limit space available to pedestrians. Equally, removal of some on-street parking (Blue Badge holders would be retained) can provide a 'quick win' to deliver more pedestrian space.

As car use has reduced during lockdown, large numbers of vehicles now spend more time parked at home. Where properties do not have off-street parking, this can lead to more pavement parking, further limiting space for people to move at a time when more people are walking in their local area.

- 8.8.4 The proposed actions for delivery are currently set out as high-level lists with the draft plan, with more detail to be added following assessments and any prioritisation exercises. What and how much we are able to undertake will depend on funding, resources and further design work.

Consultation

- 8.8.5 The emergency nature of the infrastructure projects will mean changes to the way in which we usually consult with stakeholders and the public.
- 8.8.6 We will ensure that stakeholders and the public are well informed but will not be able to carry out extensive consultation prior to implementation. Instead, we will invite comments once measures are operational and engage with local people to determine how it is working for them and if it is achieving the intended aims. This ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and communities will help to inform future scheme development and whether measures evolve or become permanent fixtures.

Funding

- 8.8.7 Government contributions will only form a part of the overall investment required to deliver the step-change in infrastructure envisaged in this Emergency Transport Plan. Other financial contributions could come from:

- Reviewing existing scheme proposals to maximise walking, cycling and public transport.
- Developing forthcoming local engineering schemes to prioritise walking and cycling and align delivery with planned maintenance programmes.
- Aligning with early works and supporting measures for the Clean Air Zone.
- Reallocating funds within the Transportation & Highways Capital Programme.
- Allocating any remaining contingency funding from the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme.
- Existing and new Section 106 obligations.
- Working with the WMCA to explore what resources they can reallocate, for example the Transforming Cities Fund.
- Collaborating with delivery partners to explore opportunities through their funded programmes and projects.

Timescales and next steps

- 8.8.8 There are many schemes and projects listed in the Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan, and an urgent need to evaluate them against the plan's vision and big moves and assess their deliverability. It may be possible to deliver some quickly with temporary infrastructure, while others will need more substantial changes.
- 8.8.9 Once this initial evaluation is complete, we will assess the timescales for delivery, considering what can be implemented in the short, medium and long term.
- 8.8.10 On-the-ground delivery will follow, but with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, particularly around Government announcements, COVID-19 alert levels and what activities people are permitted to carry out at each alert level.

8.9 Clean Air Zone

- 8.9.1 COVID-19 is having a profound impact on the economy of the city and our preparations for the Clean Air Zone (CAZ). Businesses are focused on trying to support their employees through an extraordinary situation rather than upgrade their vehicle fleets. Low income workers and residents are focused on ensuring they and their families stay safe rather than apply for an exemption or financial incentive.

- 8.9.2 COVID-19 has created a high level of uncertainty amongst our delivery partners. We have sought assurances around business continuity plans but providing any form of long-term guarantee in the current situation has proved challenging, given the rapidly evolving environment.
- 8.9.3 To this end, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport on 23rd March 2020 to ask for a postponement to the launch of the Clean Air Zone. The Clean Air Zone will now be implemented no earlier than 1st January 2021 but is under constant review.

8.10 Data for forward planning

- 8.10.1 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. Further surveys are planned for June 2020.
- 8.10.2 TfWM data analysts are studying cordon data and transport user profiles to try and understand changes in demand and mode transfer from public transport to car on key routes. We will be supporting this work and seeking insights into how we can minimise this mode transfer long term.
- 8.10.3 Discussions are also ongoing on possible updates to our transport models to represent various scenarios in the short to medium term to assist with planning.

8.11 Future public transport

- 8.11.1 Public transport operators estimate that, with social distancing, their capacity is in the region of 25% of pre COVID-19 levels. This is not a commercially viable scenario for private operators, and additional funding will be needed to protect these services.
- 8.11.2 Given how vital public transport services are in tackling many of the city's problems – air quality, carbon emissions, congestion, social and health inequalities – it is essential that pre COVID-19 transport is retained, and improvements continue to take place. The WMCA has written to Government to stress the need for more financial support. If this funding is forthcoming, it is not known whether it will continue to be paid directly to operators or administered by the Combined Authority.

8.12 Traffic Regulation Orders

- 8.12.1 Following the lockdown announcement on 23rd March, consultation on new permanent Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) was temporarily suspended pending review of how we would discharge the legal requirements to have deposited documents available for legal inspection and undertake adequate publicity. This did not extend to temporary TROs which follow a different legal process and are required to maintain the integrity of our highway network.

- 8.12.2 On 14th April 2020 the DfT released guidance to local authorities on compliance with regulations under the new circumstances. Following a further review, our TRO and Legal teams are satisfied legal requirements can now be met using alternative methods – for example by making documents available online, providing additional information on request and reviewing processes for letter distribution – and the suspension on advertising new TRO proposals has been lifted.
- 8.12.3 However, it may not be appropriate to consult on every TRO proposal at this time. Decisions to proceed are based on balancing the social issues previously raised against issues around business continuity, supporting the economy/supply chain as well as taking advantage of reduced traffic volumes to deliver some works.
- 8.12.4 This process will be kept under constant review as the situation changes.

9. Business Support

- 9.1.1 The Coronavirus pandemic, and subsequent lockdown measures introduced across the United Kingdom on 23rd May 2020, has had a severe and unprecedented impact on Birmingham's businesses and local economy. In response, Birmingham City Council has worked with the local business community, regional partners and the UK Government to design and deliver a range of extensive business support interventions and policy initiatives, overseen by the Business and Economic Recovery Strategic Cell as part of the Command and Control structure. This section of the report summaries the key areas of activity since the beginning of the crisis.
- 9.1.2 On 17th May 2020, as the scale of the potential impact on the United Kingdom's economy became clear, national government unveiled a range of support measures for businesses, aimed at preventing widespread business closures and redundancies. While these are national policy initiatives, the majority are designed to be implemented by local authorities in line with national guidance. Birmingham City Council has therefore had to work at speed to mobilise entirely new functions within the Revenues and Benefits function, including the development of new software and automation processes to get money out to the business that most need it.

Coronavirus Business Support Grants

- 9.1.3 At the heart of the national government support package for businesses are two new grant schemes for those businesses most affected by the lockdown restrictions: small businesses, and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Details of these grant schemes are broken down in the table below.

Scheme	Eligibility Criteria	Cash Grant Available
Scheme 1 – Small Business Grant Fund	Small businesses in any sector, in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rates Relief (RRR) .	£10,000
Scheme 2a -Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant Fund (rateable value <£15k)	Business in retail, hospitality or leisure sector, with property that has a rateable value of up to £15,000.	£10,000
Scheme 2b – Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant Fund (rateable value >£15k, <£51k)	Business in retail, hospitality or leisure sector, with property that has a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000.	£25,000

Businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or over, or which are not ratepayers in the business rates system, are not eligible for grants under these grant schemes.

- 9.1.4 Birmingham City Council has received an allocation of £231,576,000 to be paid out directly to 19,146 businesses identified by HMRC as potentially eligible for grants. As of 29th May 2020, we have paid out £168 million in grants to 13,845 businesses (75.52% of the total allocation). This is a massive success for the team – we have paid out more grants to more businesses than any other local authority in the United Kingdom aside from Cornwall Council. We have invested significant resources into automating our checking and payment processes, which has enabled us to significantly speed up the rate of payments to businesses.
- 9.1.5 Despite this success, we have faced a number of challenges in administering this scheme. Firstly, it is important to note that Valuation Office Agency is only able to provide details of ‘potentially eligible’ properties that appear to meet the grant qualification criteria from the business rates database. It is then for the business registered for business rates at the property to also meet the eligible business qualification criteria in order to obtain the grant. It is therefore highly unlikely that the full number of 19,146 potential business grants will ever be paid out by the Council – a situation that is mirrored across all other local authorities across the UK.

- 9.1.6 National government has been clear that they expect local authorities to apply appropriate due diligence before making payments in order to minimise fraud and prevent overpayment. This involves making payments directly to business bank accounts via BACS rather than sending cheques, as well as carrying out pre-validation checks using a variety of BCC systems and the Government Spotlight system. This targeted approach has meant that some businesses have received their grants earlier than others, allowing for more stringent checks to be applied to higher risk groups.
- 9.1.7 We have now paid out all grants where there are no further enquiries and all details were correct and up to date. Outstanding cases are likely to be around:
- Businesses not known to be occupying the premises according to our records – amending records and checks needed to pay the grant.
 - The property does not appear to fall into the Retail, Hospitality or Leisure sectors – further enquiries are being made.
 - Incomplete information on the online form – further details are required.
- 9.1.8 This is a significant exercise of collecting, validating and matching data. Sadly, we have received a number of fraudulent claims so must continue to be vigilant and validate applications to ensure that we are only paying out to eligible businesses.
- 9.1.9 Where Birmingham City Council already holds the bank details for businesses i.e. where businesses are set up to pay their business rates through Direct Debit, we have been able to pay out grants automatically. However, this only accounts for a small minority of businesses in Birmingham. Throughout this process, we have therefore largely been reliant on businesses getting in touch through the BCC website to submit the relevant details for payment via an online form.
- 9.1.10 There remain a number of businesses that appear to be eligible for a grant but have not been in touch with BCC or submitted their details for payment. We have taken a proactive approach to communications and are doing all we can to get the right messaging out to businesses, including working very closely with the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) across the city. An extensive communications campaign has been put into action with press releases, statements from the Leader and social media adverts being utilised to raise awareness with all communities of the grants and the need to complete the BCC grant form. In addition to sending out bulk emails, letters and text messages to businesses, our call centre has carried out over 3200 calls to

potentially eligible businesses and will continue trying to get in contact with all remaining businesses.

- 9.1.11 There are a number of reasons why businesses may choose not to get in touch with us to submit their details for payment. Some businesses have not historically registered for business rates and are now fearful of applying for a grant because they will potentially become liable for a backdated business rates bill. Other businesses have previously ceased trading and have left the property empty, with neither the outgoing business nor the landlord updating the business rates record.

Discretionary Business Support Scheme

- 9.1.12 On 2nd May 2020, the UK Government announced a further Discretionary Business Support Scheme (the so-called 'Top-up Business Grants 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 the UK Government is setting some national criteria for the fund, it is asking each local authority to design its own scheme and application processes, and determine which cases to support according to locally set criteria.
- 9.1.13 The national guidance for this scheme recommends that local authorities prioritise support for the following types of business:
- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces
 - 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
 - Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief, which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.
- 9.1.14 Under the Discretionary Business Support Scheme, local authorities will be able to disperse grants to the value of £25,000, £10,000 or any amount under £10,000. The allocation to each local authority is set at 5% of projected spend for the Small Business and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Funds, based on the Monday 4th May 2020 data return. Birmingham City Council's allocation is approximately £11m.
- 9.1.15 Considering the number of businesses within Birmingham likely to be eligible for support under this scheme (estimated at 10,000 businesses), and the comparatively small funding allocation, it is incumbent upon Birmingham City Council to design a scheme that both ensures that the money goes where it is

most needed and helps the maximum number of businesses possible. We have worked with the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) to design the criteria for our scheme, and the online portal for applications launched on 1st June.

9.1.16 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

9.1.17 The City Council is being asked to prioritise the following types of businesses for grants from within this funding pot:

- 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.

Business Rates Relief and Nursery Discount

9.1.18 As part of its Coronavirus business support package, on 17th March 2020 national government announced a business rates holiday for all occupied retail, leisure and hospitality properties for the year 2020/21. There is no rateable value limit for the relief.

9.1.19 On 25th March 2020, this business rates holiday was extended to estate agents, letting agents, and bingo halls.

9.1.20 Eligible properties for business rates relief must be wholly or mainly used:

- as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas or live music venues;

- for assembly and leisure;
- as hotels, guest & boarding premises and self-catering accommodation;
- as estate or letting agents; or
- as bingo halls.

9.1.21 In addition to business rates relief, on 18th March 2020 national government also announced a Nursery Discount, whereby eligible early years settings will not have to pay business rates for the year 2020/21. This scheme applies to hereditaments occupied by providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register, and wholly or mainly used for the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which are subject to business rates in the year 2020/21. There is no rateable value limit on the relief.

9.1.22 In line with these government announcements, and as of 22nd May 2020, Birmingham City Council has issued new business rates bills for the year 2020/21 confirming:

- Retail relief totalling £180.2 million to 6,525 accounts
- Nursery discount totalling £2.4 million to 246 accounts

Support to Commercial Tenants

9.1.23 In addition to administration of the above national government schemes, Birmingham City Council has taken proactive steps to support local businesses in its role as a commercial landlord.

9.1.24 In line with the approach outlined in emergency Coronavirus legislation, we have put measures in place to ensure that no rent recovery action is taken against our commercial tenants in relation to payment of the current quarter (March-June 2020) rent and service charge. Alongside this, we will not issue any rent review or lease renewal notices seeking to increase their rent at this time.

9.1.25 Invoicing is generally quarterly in advance, and so invoices for this quarter were issued at the beginning of March 2020, around three weeks prior to lockdown. However, those tenants who have made contact with the Property Services team and sought assistance with paying their rents have been reassured that no recovery action will be taken at this time. Where possible, we have encouraged commercial tenants to either move to monthly payments (if they are not already paying monthly), or to make part-payment of their rent against their current invoice. We have also proactively signposted business tenants to available business support schemes, including the various Coronavirus business support grant schemes.

- 9.1.26 We are working alongside the Corporate Communications and Property Services teams to develop a more formal communications strategy to reach out to any commercial tenants who have not contacted Birmingham City Council directly to discuss their circumstances.

Business Improvement Districts

- 9.1.27 Birmingham City Council fully recognises the important contribution that Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) make to our city and business community, and is working alongside BIDs to identify a Recovery Plan for the City Centre and our suburban High Streets in the long-term.
- 9.1.28 In the more immediate term, we have moved to safeguard our twelve BIDs by making around £3 million of payments under the terms of existing legal contracts, in advance of the collection of BIDs levies from around 5,000 businesses across the city. In agreement with each individual BID company, we have agreed to postpone recovery proceedings and issues of final demand notices for BID levies until October 2020. This will assist these businesses with cashflow in the short-term, and provides BIDs with a significant window of time to promote their business plans and re-state their value to the levy payers.

Lobbying national government for additional support

- 9.1.29 While Birmingham City Council recognises that national government has provided a hitherto unprecedented level of support to help businesses impacted by the Coronavirus crisis, we also believe that further interventions are necessary to support businesses and the economy and safeguard economic recovery.
- 9.1.30 With this in mind, on 9th April 2020 Birmingham City Council, with the support of Core Cities, submitted a proposal to national government requesting additional funding to ensure that local businesses impacted by COVID-19 continue trading and retain workers. Our proposal seeks additional funding to establish a £100 million Business Survival Fund to plug gaps in the current provision and respond to the needs of individual businesses.
- 9.1.31 Through the Business Survival Fund, grants of £10k - £200k would be made available to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operating across all business sectors not eligible for Business Rates Relief, £10k Small Business Grant Fund and £25k Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. Moreover, funding would be made available to SMEs not able to access or for whom loan finance is not appropriate. Based upon extensive experience of developing and growing SME's we estimated that such a scheme would help 5,000 SMEs to survive and continue trading, as well as safeguarding 20,000 existing jobs.

- 9.1.32 For companies that require funding over and above the grant limit of £200,000 then we propose the establishment of a National SME Equity Fund. This funding approach would sit alongside the proposed grant scheme as well as the Government's debt led approach to assisting companies.
- 9.1.33 Since making this proposal to national government, we have welcomed the announcement of the Discretionary Business Support Scheme, which provides a small amount of additional funding for local authorities to disperse to businesses not eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. However, we still believe that additional funding and business support is required to support Birmingham businesses and the local economy, and await feedback on our request.
- 9.1.34 In addition to lobbying for a Business Survival Fund, we have made the case to national government to shift the targeting of European Union Growth Funding (£7 million available in the GBSLEP area) from the creation of new jobs to the safeguarding of existing jobs. Under this proposal, grants of £10k to £200k would be offered to SMEs operating across all business sectors to complement existing national government loan provision and other Coronavirus business support measures. Funding would be focussed on businesses that were thriving prior to the pandemic and are now seeking to move towards recovery.

9.2 Council Tax Support

COVID-19 Hardship Fund

- 9.2.1 As part of its response to Coronavirus, on 11th March 2020 national government announced the creation of the COVID-19 Hardship Fund, providing £500m of new grant funding to local authorities to enable them to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area.
- 9.2.2 Birmingham City Council's allocation through this fund totalled £17.4 million, based on our share of the national caseload of working-age recipients of Council Tax Support (CTS).
- 9.2.3 Under this scheme, local authorities are expected to reduce the council tax bill of all working-age recipients of CTS by £150 for the financial year 2020/21, or by a lesser amount if that is all that remains to be paid for the year. This reduction is to be applied automatically, regardless of whether the household has been affected either directly or indirectly by COVID-19. Council tax reductions should be applied as soon as possible, with households rebilled as quickly as possible.
- 9.2.4 Birmingham City Council already has a generous CTS scheme, providing full protection from paying any council tax to around 80,000 households out of a total caseload of around 120,000. This £150 reduction will therefore affect the remaining 40,000 households who receive CTS but still have a council tax

liability. There is no 'cut off point' for this award – the £150 award will be made to all successful new claimants of CTS in the financial year 2020/21.

- 9.2.5 At the time of the national government announcement, council tax bills for 2020/21 had already been issued to households across Birmingham. Revised council tax bills were issued to affected households in the week beginning 26th May, and include an additional page explaining the reduction and why this has been made.
- 9.2.6 Revised bills have a first instalment date from September 2020, giving affected households a period of 'breathing space' before payments resume in the autumn. The remaining balance will then be spread across four low monthly payments (on average around £20 a month) until December 2020. This will also give some flexibility for the Council to make arrangements where people may have difficulties over the last three months of the financial year.

Additional Council Tax support offers

- 9.2.7 In addition to the new COVID-19 Hardship Fund, Birmingham City Council also has an existing Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund, providing support for people experiencing extreme financial difficulty. It has been agreed to increase this from £250,000 to £500,000 in the 2020/21 financial year.
- 9.2.8 For those people who are struggling to pay their council tax bill but do not qualify for CTS or the Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund, we have been offering people the option to move their first council tax payment from 1st April 2020 to 28th June 2020. This will give them three months 'free' at the beginning of the year and still allow them to make payments over a ten month period.

10 Finance

- 10.1 To date the Government has announced that the Council will receive £70.3m of un-ringfenced COVID-19 related funding and £9.8m of ringfenced funding for infection control in care homes as shown below:

Grant Funding Announced			
Grant	National Amount £m	BCC Amount £m	BCC %
Tranche 1	1,600.000	38.744	2.4%
Tranche 2	1,594.000	31.566	2.0%
Total Unringfenced	3,194.000	70.310	2.2%
Infection Control	600.000	9.761	1.5%
Total	3,794.000	80.071	2.1%

- 10.2 Although the Government did not announce the basis of allocation of the first tranche of funding it appears to be based on need assessment formulae. The second tranche of funding has been allocated on a per capita basis. Despite raising the Council's forecast costs with Government, it is disappointing that the Council has received a lower level of funding in this second tranche.
- 10.3 On 13th May 2020 the Prime Minister announced that a further £600m will be made available nationally to help with infection control in care homes and for Birmingham City Council this amounts to £9.761m and was allocated based on number of care home beds as a proportion of the number of care home beds nationally plus an area cost adjustment.
- 10.4 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 £174.5m excluding risks and £272.4m including risks. 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". In addition the Council has identified £5.6m of HRA risks. The table below provides an overview of pressures and risks the Council is facing between years.

Forecast Pressures on Expenditure and Income							
Financial Year	Expenditure		Income		Total		
	Forecast £m	Risk £m	Forecast £m	Risk £m	Forecast £m	Risk £m	Total £m
2020/21	88.109	26.474	66.632	3.964	154.741	30.438	185.179
2021/22	5.793	7.200	13.966	60.281	19.759	67.481	87.240
Gross GF Pressures	93.902	33.674	80.598	64.245	174.500	97.919	272.419
Unringfenced Grant Received*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(70.310)	N/A	(70.310)
Net GF Pressures	93.902	33.674	80.598	64.245	104.190	97.919	202.109
HRA Costs	0.000	5.580	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.580	5.580

- 10.5 The two-year costs identified to date have exceeded the allocation of £70.3m granted to Birmingham by £104.2m for General Fund. When risks are also factored in costs could exceed the £70.3m allocation by £202.1m General Fund plus £5.6m HRA. The total cost including risks to the Council over two years could be £207.7m. It should be borne in mind that all the financial risks identified

to date have been quantified and are expected to impact the Council during the 6 month period that has been used to identify the pressures.

- 10.6 The current assumption for the financial position for 2020/21 is based on a 6-month premise for the duration of the COVID-19 major incidents along with some residual costs.
- 10.7 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 the Council's ability to grow income.
- 10.8 MHCLG requires all local authorities to submit returns that assume the duration of the crisis to be 4 months, whereas the monitoring/reporting that is being undertaken by the Council, as stated earlier, assumes a 6-month duration. On the basis of a 4-month crisis and as reported to MHCLG on 15 May 2020 the Council's estimated total costs in 2020/21 are £221.134m General Fund and £5.580m HRA. In addition, the Council reported losses of business rates income due to reliefs announced by the Government of £165.460m (fully funded by Government Grant) resulting in a total impact reported of £392.174m. This is summarised in the table below.

MHCLG 15th May Return Summary – Assumes a 4-month crisis	
2020/21 Impact	£m
Additional Costs	94.484
Income Losses	126.650
Total General Fund Impact	221.134
Business Rates Reliefs Funded by Government	165.460
HRA Impact	5.580
Total Impact Submitted to MHCLG	392.174

10.9 Cashflow and Borrowing issues:

- 10.9.1 Local authorities up and down the country are facing extreme uncertainty about the timing and scale of the costs they will need to incur, and about the timing of Government funding to support these. This creates cashflow deficits which, given the scale of the measures involved, could require millions of borrowing or financial commitments before the receipt of funding.
- 10.9.2 The main source of short-term borrowing is from other local authorities, some of whom have surplus cash available to lend. However, in the current circumstances, many authorities are keeping their cash close and are not lending in the normal way. As a result, there is currently less short term borrowing available to local authorities, including Birmingham.

- 10.9.3 The Government has responded very helpfully in providing major COVID-19 funding quickly, including the general support grant to local authorities and the funding for business support. This has eased the immediate cashflow pressure the City Council was facing. Continuation of a payment in advance by the Government will be a major help in the coming months. The Government has confirmed it will pay grants to fund the business rates discounts awarded to retail and nursery businesses across the city starting with a double payment in mid-May. It is impossible to be clear about future cashflows in current circumstances.
- 10.9.4 A very helpful backstop would be if the Government could provide a short-term borrowing facility for local authorities. This could readily be done using the arrangements in place in the DMADF (Debt Management Account Deposit Facility) which since the 2008 banking crisis has been available to take short term deposits of temporarily surplus cash from local authorities. It should be straightforward to extend this into a short-term borrowing facility for local authorities. CIPFA's Treasury Management Panel requested a DMADF borrowing facility in a recent meeting with HM Treasury.
- 10.9.5 The existing PWLB borrowing arrangements are not suitable for this purpose, as PWLB loans are for a minimum of 1 year and the rates are high. For example if an authority needs to borrow for only 2 weeks to cover a temporary cash outflow, it may have to borrow for 12 months at high interest rates, which could cost £millions over a whole year. This would be a substantial profit to central government at the expense of local authorities.
- 10.9.6 It is still too early to be clear about the cost of borrowing to meet COVID-19 related cashflow deficits for the period before they are permanently funded. Using currently known costs and funding, an interest cost of £2.6m over the next two years has been calculated at PWLB interest rates.

11 City-wide Impacts and Future Look

- 11.1 In addition to the human tragedy that Coronavirus has caused, there are likely to be long lasting social and economic impacts.
- 11.2 Birmingham has not seen the worst case scenario in terms of confirmed COVID-19 cases or deaths, thanks to the tremendous work done by colleagues across health and social care. What the mortality data does seem to show, however, is a significant variance in how the virus has affected different demographic groups across the city. Understanding how Coronavirus has affected our communities differently must be a vital part of the Birmingham recovery, not just so that we can understand how to build up the resilience of communities in the future, but to more clearly 'unpick' the links between economic, social and health outcomes, and safeguard the trust of our communities in the Council.
- 11.3 Looking towards the economy, the initial economic data is challenging. Oxford Economics is predicting that Birmingham will be one of the most affected cities globally, due to the exposure of our manufacturing and university sectors, with the city's GDP contracting by nearly 7% in 2020. More widely across the West Midlands, the Enterprise Research Centre has outlined two potential recovery

scenarios for the region – Scenario 1 (based on the 2008 financial crisis) predicts that 336,088 jobs (17.2% of all jobs) could be lost, while the slightly more optimistic Scenario 2 (based on ONS COVID-19 survey data) predicts job losses of only 103,120 (5.3%). The speed and shape of recovery is generally accepted to be directly dependent on the length of lockdown restrictions and the UK's success in preventing a 'second wave' of infections, neither of which is currently known.

- 11.4 The latest release from ONS (for the period 20 April to 3 May 2020) shows that 20% of businesses across the UK have temporarily closed or paused trading. For those businesses that were continuing to trade, 61% reported a decrease in turnover, and 76% of businesses had furloughed staff. Currently 20% of the entire UK workforce is furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The picture is similar in the West Midlands. According to the British Chambers of Commerce COVID-19 Business Tracker (7th May), 59% of businesses in the West Midlands have seen a fall in their UK revenue, and 63% have seen a decline in cash reserves. A third of businesses expect their cash reserves to last for 1-3 months, 29% say they will last for 3-6 months, and 13% expect to be covered for less than a month. 4% of businesses have no cash reserves at all. Just under half of businesses are not able to access any of the UK government Coronavirus grant schemes. Widespread redundancies and closures have so far been held at bay by a package of Coronavirus business support schemes, but the next few months will be critical for businesses as lockdown restrictions are slowly lifted and businesses adapt to a new range of challenges including social distancing restrictions, the need for PPE, the accelerated take-up of new technologies, and reconfigured supply chains.
- 11.5 The latest unemployment figures from the ONS for April 2020 (the first full month of lockdown) show that the number of claimants in Birmingham has risen by 16,655 to 66,025 people (12.3% of the economically active population). This is the highest claimant rate across all ten Core Cities, and significantly higher than the UK unemployment rate of 6.3%. This dramatic rise in unemployment comes despite the widespread furloughing of employees through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – many experts consider that we won't see the true impact on employment until November 2020 when the furloughing scheme ends (with a possible spike in August 2020 when employees are asked to start contributing 40% of furloughed employees wages).
- 11.6 Initial analyses of the impact on Coronavirus on employment again show that some groups in society will be affected more than others. The IFS found that younger people (under 25) were about two and a half times more likely to work in a sector affected by the lockdown, compared to other employees. Sectors impacted by lockdown e.g. non-food retail, restaurants, and hotels employ nearly 30% of all employees under the age of 35, compared to just 13% of employees aged 25 and over. The McKinsey Global Institute, in its analysis of jobs at risk in the UK economy, found that 'at-risk' jobs are disproportionately concentrated in disadvantaged groups, including the young (under 35), lone parents, part-time workers, and women (due to women being over-represented in the lone parent and part-time worker groups). According to McKinsey, the most vulnerable workers are also those most at risk, with a strong correlation between furloughing

and low income/low levels of education. This is particularly worrying considering that low-earners have worse employment prospects after redundancy, and particularly worrying for Birmingham considering our young population (46% of citizens under 30 years old) and low rates of educational attainment (16% of people in Birmingham have no formal qualifications, twice the national average of 8%).

- 11.7 In general, there is a growing body of evidence that the economic fallout from COVID-19 will disproportionately impact on young people. Over a decade on from the 2008 economic crisis, the Resolution Foundation found that young people who entered the workforce during that period continue to face higher rates of unemployment, lower pay, and lower job prospects, dubbing them the 'crisis cohort'. Early indications are that the Coronavirus crisis and ensuing economic turmoil will once again significantly impact on younger generations, whether due to educational disruption, reduced employment prospects, or diminished aspirations. A UK-wide survey of young people (aged 14-25) carried out by Beatfrecks found that 65% of respondents were worried about their mental health, and 58% said that COVID-19 has left them unsure about their futures. Targeted employment and skills support for young people, and other vulnerable groups disproportionately impacted by Coronavirus, may be required to prevent a sharp increase in inequality across the city.
- 11.8 For those vulnerable people who were already struggling prior to Coronavirus, the pandemic and ensuing lockdown restrictions are likely to have made life even more difficult, exacerbating economic and social inequalities across Birmingham. Detailed data on the impact of lockdown on domestic abuse rates is still being compiled, however a general rise in presentations has been observed across Birmingham in line with national trends. Birmingham City Council Housing services have reported an increase in domestic abuse presentations by 30% compared to the previous period in 2019, and Birmingham Women's Aid have reported a significant increase in calls to their helpline.
- 11.9 There has been a noticeable dip in adult safeguarding concerns referred to the Council during lockdown, which may lead to a rise in 'deferred' activity once restrictions are fully lifted, placing additional strain on Adult Social Care services. Data from the Birmingham Children's Trust shows a similar drop in contacts and referrals for vulnerable children and families.
- 11.10 As lockdown restrictions begin to lift, we have started to look beyond the pandemic and towards developing an approach for recovery – a broad-ranging framework for action that attempts to tackle the complex and multi-faceted impact of Coronavirus on our communities and our city. Our challenge will be to incorporate learning and best practice from the previous 2008 financial crash and recovery, whilst also acknowledging the wholly unprecedented nature of the current crisis and the uncertainty of the next few months, including the potential for lockdown restrictions to go through several cycles of easing and tightening before being fully lifted. As other cities and regions across the world come out of lockdown, we may also wish to learn from their experiences to find out 'what works'.

- 11.11 Over the past few weeks, the Council Leadership Team, working alongside Cabinet Members and partners through the City Board, have initially identified the following four themes for the recovery programme:

Scenario-planning post lockdown

- 11.12 While the decision on how to exit lockdown will be taken at a national level, the City Council is assessing potential scenarios and their possible impacts, planning ahead for the range of implications at economic, community and organisational levels.
- 11.13 Uniquely for this crisis, we are likely to see both 'response' and 'recovery' occur simultaneously throughout summer 2020, with some sectors taking steps towards recovery (construction, manufacturing) whilst others remain under considerable strain (health and social care, bereavement services). This effect may be exacerbated if the government decides to take a 'phased' approach to reopening the economy, lifting restrictions on a sector by sector basis. We can reasonably expect that some sectors (construction, manufacturing, health and social care) may see a spike in 'deferred activity' as lockdown restrictions are eased, whereas other sectors (leisure and retail, travel, tourism) may be affected by longer-term changes in individual behaviour and consumption habits.

Economic recovery

- 11.14 Until now, economic recovery activities have focused on immediate and short-term support to businesses (grant distribution, business rates holidays, loan schemes) and residents (Council Tax rebates, hardship funding, food distribution). Increasingly, however, attention is turning to the medium- and longer-term economic recovery, and key considerations including the identification of priority economic development projects, levers for increased capital and government investment into the region, and the potential to rebuild our economy – perhaps along the lines of a 'green economy'. Consideration must also be given about how we might rebuild the Birmingham economy without also 'rebuilding' the economic inequalities that were already apparent prior to the crisis (linking into the 'community recovery' theme).

Community recovery

- 11.15 In addition to the economic impact of the crisis, it has become increasingly apparent that COVID-19 has affected some communities more than others, and will, in all likelihood, exacerbate some of the pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities across the city. At the same time, the response of the voluntary and community sectors has provided a cause for celebration, giving energy and focus to existing community engagement and community cohesion agendas.

Organisational lessons learned

- 11.16 Finally, COVID-19 is likely to leave behind a complicated legacy for organisations. Clearly, this virus has had horrifying and profound implications for individuals, families and communities, while causing significant damage to businesses and our local economy. At the same time, however, the response to the crisis has 'brought out the best' in many organisations: accelerating partnership working, forcing the development of innovative new service delivery/business models, and driving the uptake of new technologies and alternative working arrangements. City Board Partners may wish to reflect on what these positive changes have been, how these might be captured, and what they might wish to retain as part of the transition to the 'new normal'.
- 11.17 Throughout our discussions with communities and partners, we have seen little appetite for a return to 'business as usual' – which may in any case be impossible. Instead, our approach to recovery should focus on building a long-term, forward-looking vision for Birmingham, taking the opportunity to build the type of city and communities that we all want to live, work and learn in.
- 11.18 It is important, however, to remember that we are not starting entirely 'from scratch'. Existing City-wide initiatives such as the 'Route to Zero' programme present a range of opportunities to drive forward recovery, including the shift towards a carbon-neutral, sustainable economy and the ongoing work to redraw our relationship with citizens through the localism agenda.

Background papers

Birmingham Emergency Transport Plan

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/16305/emergency_birmingham_transport_plan