



## North Norfolk District Council Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Summary: This report details North Norfolk District Council's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic at a strategic, local and organisational level. This includes:-

- establishing a dedicated COVID helpline and email address operated over extended Customer Service hours including weekends and Bank Holidays since 30<sup>th</sup> March;
- making contact with over 2000 local residents who are "shielding" under Government advice and providing support to over 1200 other people who are self-isolating and who have requested support from the Council with shopping and prescription deliveries;
- operation of 10 Local Co-ordination Centres through which support has been provided to vulnerable people through voluntary community networks and Council staff
- is administering the distribution of the Council Tax Hardship fund to 3424 households
- administered £26million of Small Business Rate Reliefs and £45million of Small Business Grants on behalf of the Government.

The report also outlines preparations being made by the Council for the Recovery phase of this global incident.

Options considered: The report details the Council's actions in responding to the Coronavirus pandemic during the Response phase and the preparations being made for the Recovery phase. Options considered are outlined in the report.

Conclusions: The report details the actions taken by the District Council in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and of the preparations being made to support local communities and businesses "recover" from this unprecedented global event.

Recommendations: **Cabinet is asked to note and comment on the Council's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic; and**

**note and comment upon the preparations being made for Recovery – to include:-**

- **the short-term actions proposed in respect of:-**
  - **opening up the Council's services and facilities;**

- transition for the stepping down of the Community Support Programme;
  - planning the return of staff to their main roles from working at home and redeployment into other roles;
  - re-establishing formal meetings of the Council and
  - critically considering the implications of lockdown and phased lifting of social distancing restrictions, possibly over a number of months, on local businesses, particularly tourism businesses which face having a severely curtailed summer season.
- the longer term need to review the Council's Medium-Term Financial strategy in light of the changing financial situation of the Council and as a result undertake a review of the Council's proposed programme of activity as previously detailed in the Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan.

Reasons for Recommendations:

To inform corporate learning from experience gained through the Response phase and inform decisions moving forward through the Recovery phase

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
Cllr Sarah Butikofer, Leader of the Council	All
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Coronavirus is a global pandemic event which has been widely reported in national media since the beginning of 2020. Originating in the Wuhan province of central China, the virus has spread across the world over the past four months. Over 3 million people are now believed to have contracted the virus with cases recorded in almost all nations around the world; with global deaths now exceeding 200,000 individuals (John Hopkins University, BBC News website 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020). The virus is highly contagious and has spread quickly around the world through international travel, with many national governments adopting strict social distancing and lockdown policies to try and halt the spread of the virus, protect health services from being overwhelmed and save lives. The virus, which infects the respiratory system, appears to have particularly serious, if not fatal, outcomes for older people and people with underlying health conditions.

- 1.2 In the UK, cases of Coronavirus first began to be recorded in relatively small numbers during February, with the first death recorded on 5<sup>th</sup> March. At this time, the impact of the virus at a global level was beginning to be understood and the UK Government began to make formal preparatory arrangements to manage and contain the spread of the virus across the UK. Initially this was through contact tracing and then the adoption of public health and economic policies, including standing up Local Resilience Forum structures and proposing to increase capacity within NHS hospitals to manage any peak infection through suspension of elective procedures, moving some patients from acute hospital into community hospital or convalescent settings and establishing some temporary Nightingale Hospitals in London and key regional centres.
- 1.3 At the same time the Government made a number of announcements in support of businesses and the economy through the Budget on the 11<sup>th</sup> March and then again on 18<sup>th</sup> March – including Rate Relief for Small Businesses, a Small Business Grant Scheme, a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and an employee furlough scheme where the Government meets 80% of costs of employees temporarily unable to work because of Government guidance that people should stay at home with most businesses unable to operate.
- 1.4 The Government also announced on 20<sup>th</sup> March significant additional funding (£1.6billion) for the local government sector to assist in the national response to Coronavirus – including support for people with serious underlying health conditions to “shield” themselves by staying at home and indoors for twelve weeks and for people over the age of 70 and with a range of other underlying health conditions to “self-isolate” so as to protect themselves from the possibility of contracting the virus; provision of accommodation for rough sleepers and homeless people and in the administration of business rate relief and grant programmes.
- 1.5 Then, on the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the Prime Minister announced that in order to try and halt the spread of the virus, manage increasing demand on acute NHS services and capacity and save lives, the UK would follow the policies of many countries around the world through requiring people to Stay at Home – ie a lockdown, initially for a period of three weeks; with emergency legislation being enacted on the 26<sup>th</sup> March putting statutory powers in place in respect of non-essential travel, public gatherings, remote council meetings etc.
- 1.6 At a Norfolk level, Local Resilience Forum arrangements were put in place from 10<sup>th</sup> March; based on adopted and rehearsed civil contingency plans – most recently developed for a pandemic flu incident. These arrangements see a multi-agency taskforce established across the local authority, health, emergency services, utilities and government bodies to manage the local response to emergency situations with Steve Blatch representing the Council on the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) which has been meeting three times a week; and Steve Hems and Alison Sayer representing North Norfolk on the Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG), which has been meeting daily between five and seven days a week over the past six weeks.
- 1.7 North Norfolk District Council has then put in place its own civil contingency / business continuity plans through a Gold and Silver structure operating since 23<sup>rd</sup> March; with Gold meeting daily (Monday to Friday) made up of Steve Blatch, Steve Hems, Sean Kelly, Alison Sayer and Cllr Sarah Butikofer to manage the Council’s strategic response and resource allocation to the incident taking reference from the County SCG and TCG structures; and Silver meeting daily (Monday to Friday) essentially being the Operational

Management Team, chaired by Sarah Ashurst to oversee business continuity, staff allocation / redeployment etc.

## **2. North Norfolk District Council's response – as a timeline**

2.1 As the potential impact of Coronavirus in the UK became increasingly understood during March; the District Council took the following decisions and actions:-

- SLT discussed our possible response to and preparations for Coronavirus at its meetings of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March
- Following the Chancellor's Budget on 11th March announcing Small Business Rate Reliefs for 2020/21 the Business Rates Team wrote to 2,000 customers issuing new bills to reflect the new reliefs, all of which was completed by the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 7 days after the additional reliefs were announced. In total, business rate reliefs in excess of £26m were provided to 6,000 customers.
- During the week of 16<sup>th</sup> March, the Council's Benefit Team began receiving large numbers of calls about entitlement to benefits from people who were fearful of their job security and income during any social distancing / anticipated lockdown period and began applying Hardship Fund monies to people in receipt of Council Tax Support.
- During the week of 16<sup>th</sup> March, in response to Government advice on social-distancing, the Council made preparations for large numbers of staff to work from home.
- As Government guidance on social-distancing increased during the week of the 16<sup>th</sup> March and there was some evidence of panic buying of hand sanitiser, soap and toilet rolls, the authority saw some vandalism and theft from its public toilets and a decision was taken to close 17 facilities on 19<sup>th</sup> March, under delegated authority of the Head of Paid Service.
- On 20<sup>th</sup> March the Government announced significant additional funding (£1.6billion) for the local government sector to assist in the national response to Coronavirus. Much of this funding was allocated to upper tier and unitary authorities which have social care responsibilities. North Norfolk District Council received £56,802 from this announcement towards its response to Coronavirus.
- Following large numbers of people visiting coastal areas in the good weather of the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March, the Council closed its coastal car parks from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, again under delegated authority of the Head of Paid Service.
- Following the Prime Minister's statement on the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the Council closed Cromer Pier, all public toilets and children's playgrounds in support of Government advice that everyone should Stay at Home to Protect the NHS and Save Lives except for four stated purposes – food shopping, to access medical services and provide care support to relatives / neighbours, daily exercise and work as a key worker where it was not possible to work from home. These closures were approved under delegated authority of Head of Paid Service and Property Services Manager.
- From 24<sup>th</sup> March, the majority of staff were advised to work from home, with pressure on the Council's IT systems managed through staff being asked to work over a two-shift arrangement 08:00 – 14:00 and 14:00 – 20:00.
- Following further Government guidance issued on 26<sup>th</sup> March, the Council closed its leisure centres and its leisure contractor furloughed its staff in accordance with the Government's programme with the Council agreeing to provide financial support under delegated

authority of Head of Economic and Community Development.

- During the week of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March arrangements were developed to operate a Community Support model establishing 10 Local Co-ordination Centres supported by a “back-office” tasking team to receive requests for support with shopping, prescriptions and other non-emergency requests by people shielding or self-isolating in accordance with Government advice, with requests being fulfilled through local community volunteer networks and District Council staff. A delegated authority form was completed in respect of these arrangements by the Head of Paid Service.
- On 30<sup>th</sup> March the Community Support programme went “live” with the 10 Local Co-ordination Centres being staffed on weekdays between 10:00 – 16:00.
- During the week of the 30<sup>th</sup> March, the SCG agreed that letters would be sent to all households in Norfolk providing advice and guidance of local support available to people during the Coronavirus lockdown period. This was at a cost of £27,500, agreed under delegated authority by the Head of Paid Service, with delivery of the letters taking place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April. This letter detailed a dedicated North Norfolk COVID helpline number and email address staffed 08:00 – 20:00 Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays and 10:00-16:00 on Saturdays and Sundays and Bank Holidays.
- In response to large numbers of people again not complying with the Government advice about non-essential travel to access coastal and countryside locations for exercise and dog-walking over the weekend of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March, local police colleagues asked the Council on 30<sup>th</sup> March to close car parks at Holt Country Park, Pretty Corner Woods at Sheringham and the Vale Road beach access at Mundesley – all these locations remained open to local people accessing the sites on foot. These closures were agreed under delegated authority by the Head of Paid Service.
- From 30<sup>th</sup> March, the Business Rates, Economic Growth, IT and Communications Teams developed the systems required to support the process of administering the distribution of £65million of Small Business Grant Funds to 5000 potentially eligible businesses, with registration for applications going live from 4<sup>th</sup> April and first payments being made on 8<sup>th</sup> April.
- Over the Easter weekend Friday 10<sup>th</sup> – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April, the COVID helpline and email address were staffed between 10:00 – 16:00 for requests for assistance from people shielding / self-isolating and the Business Rates Team worked across the weekend processing business grant applications.
- On 16<sup>th</sup> April the Government advised that lockdown restrictions would remain in place for a further three weeks and new delegated authority forms were completed by the Head of Paid Service extending the closure of coastal and country park car parks, public toilets and Cromer Pier.
- On 25<sup>th</sup> April the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced that the Government was to provide a further £1.6bn to the local government sector. Subsequently the Council was advised (28<sup>th</sup> April) that it would receive £1,045,316 through this announcement.
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the Government announced an extension of the Small Business Grant Scheme to provide support to businesses which fall outside the criteria of the current scheme. Whilst at the time of writing this report (5<sup>th</sup> May) the amount of funds which will be paid to North Norfolk District Council is not known, consideration is being given to how this money might be allocated locally.
- On 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May, the District Council accommodated the provision

of mobile testing facilities provided by the Army at The Meadow Car Park in Cromer and Highfield Road Car Park in Fakenham. Further test visits are anticipated in future weeks and will be managed through the Localities and Property Services Teams.

- As of the date of writing this report (5<sup>th</sup> May) the SCG / TCG arrangements at a County level and our internal civil contingency arrangements are considered to be operating well, with thought beginning to be given to possible Recovery arrangements which for the District Council will involve stepping down the Community Support arrangements, opening up of car parks, toilets etc; seeing staff return to their main roles from working at home and redeployment into other roles and considering the implications of lockdown and phased lifting of social distancing restriction, possibly over a number of months, on local businesses, particularly tourism businesses which may face having a severely curtailed summer season.
- A verbal update on the lifting of any lockdown / social distancing restrictions and the response of the Council and transition to Recovery will be made at the Cabinet meeting.

### **3. Detailed actions / response by North Norfolk District Council**

#### **3.1 Community Support, Shielded and Vulnerable People, Food Hubs**

3.1.1 Early in the national planning process to protect the most vulnerable in our communities from contracting Coronavirus the Government advised that it would be writing to some 1.5 million people across the UK with serious underlying health conditions advising them that they should “shield” themselves by staying at home and indoors for 12 weeks from mid-March. The Government also advised that people aged Over 70 and with a list of underlying health conditions should also seek to protect themselves by “self-isolating” by staying at home. In order that these groups could stay at home, the Government asked local councils and voluntary community arrangements to put in place arrangements to support people with shopping, prescription delivery and other non-emergency support.

3.1.2 The Council therefore developed a Community Support model establishing 10 Local Co-ordination Centres supported by a “back-office” tasking team to receive requests for support with shopping, prescriptions and other non-emergency requests by people shielding or self-isolating in accordance with Government advice, with requests being fulfilled through local community volunteer networks and District Council staff. This support was outlined in a letter sent to all households in North Norfolk providing advice and guidance of local support available to people during the Coronavirus lockdown period. The letter detailed a dedicated North Norfolk COVID helpline number and email address staffed 08:00 – 20:00 Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays and 10:00-16:00 on Saturdays and Sundays and Bank Holidays.

3.1.3 In the weeks of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April the Council was advised of 2000 people in North Norfolk registering through the Government’s Shielded Programme and Council staff contacted each of these people by phone to ask how they were and if they had support to live independently during the 12-week period they were advised to stay at home. The majority of these people did have family or neighbour support, but some 250 advised they would need help with shopping, support to access online deliveries through national supermarkets or local shops, or with assistance collecting prescriptions or with befriending calls.

3.1.4 Further, in addition to the outbound calls to these 2000 shielded individuals, at 28<sup>th</sup> April the Council had responded to 1012 requests for assistance to the

Council's dedicated helpline by other Vulnerable People – ie older people or people with underlying health conditions since 7<sup>th</sup> April, through the Local Co-ordination Centres; as well as having delivered over 2000 prescriptions on behalf of local GP surgeries and pharmacies.

3.1.5 Whilst much support with shopping has been fulfilled by national supermarkets and arrangements made with local stores which have responded to the needs of shielding and vulnerable people by taking orders and payments over the phone and then making local deliveries; the Council has established a Food Hub operation at the Cromer and Fakenham Local Co-ordination Centres to provide food parcels and basic provisions for people in need. This operation has been supported with donations from Morrisons, Roys of Wroxham, Kinnerton Confectionery at Fakenham, the Holkham Estate and Norwich City Football Club Community Sports Foundation for which the Council is hugely grateful and over the three weeks to 28<sup>th</sup> April the Council had distributed over 250 food parcels.

3.1.6 Much of this support has been very gratefully received by recipients many of whom have commented very positively to the Council about the support they have received. Examples include:-

- An elderly lady living on her own has been helped four times in getting food from Stalham Shopper and prescriptions to her front door. She has said she takes back anything bad she's ever said about the council because NNDC have been fantastic. She has said she has seen lots of horror stories in the press about people who are unable to get help, yet in North Norfolk we have done a brilliant job. She cannot thank us all enough. She has also said after this is over she will be swapping her normal weekly taxi journey to her main supermarket in favour of the Stalham Shopper who have been so helpful and accommodating.
  - A couple, with the wife suffering from two intolerances and husband self-isolating, have been full of praise and thanks to NNDC who have managed to obtain and deliver gluten free items, including bread and jelly babies which help her manage her diabetes, all possible thanks to petty cash provision.
  - A family who were all self-isolating due to severe medical conditions within the family home, were thankful to NNDC for sourcing, buying and delivering some emergency Cow and Gate baby milk. This was really helpful to them and they couldn't believe how quickly we provided help.
  - Shielded mother and her 12-year-old son with autism needed urgent help with food. The mother also needed assistance with her son. The Council delivered food parcels in the short term along with various local support information and provided details relating to services Norfolk County Council provide to assist her son. Very thankful and appreciative of our response.
  - Shielding lady, living on her own, was very thankful for us delivering dog food after she ran out and didn't know how to get hold of any. With use of petty cash the food was purchased and delivered on the same day.
  - Elected member from a council on the south Coast who has two elderly parents living in North Norfolk was full of praise and thanks after we arranged for food parcel delivery as an emergency, and arranged for a click and collect order to be collected from Asda and made plans for medication delivery. Very impressed with our response and the information provided in the form of a support information leaflet from the Local Co-ordination Centre. Very pleasing to hear that there are extensive volunteer groups operating alongside NNDC also.
- One person commented "Since we spoke yesterday I have been in contact with Morrisons - no joy there but then I contacted Tesco and they have given me a priority slot for doorstep delivery food shopping. Not there yet but it sounds hopeful. So, no need to ask Jemma or



another to shop for us right now. Please thank them for their offer of help. Will let you know if the situation changes. Thanks so much for all your help and your concern. I will never moan about my council tax again!”

### **3.2 Homeless Support**

3.2.1 In response to Government advice that local authorities should seek to accommodate rough-sleepers and homeless people through the period of the Coronavirus lockdown to protect these people, many of whom have underlying health conditions, from contracting the virus; the Council’s Housing Options Team has secured accommodation for 13 individuals at a cost to date of £14,625.00

### **3.3 Hardship Fund**

3.3.1 The District Council was awarded £724,000 to operate a Council Tax Hardship Fund for people in receipt of Council Tax Support. Initial estimates are that 3424 households should receive discounts of up to £150 on their Council tax bill, with a total of £366,213.75 being awarded based on current caseloads.

3.3.2 In the six weeks since 16th March, the Benefits Team has handled over 5100 enquiries for support, an increase of 85% in caseload over the six-week period.

### **3.4 Business Rate Reliefs and Support Grants**

3.4.1 In the weeks of 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the Business Rates Team awarded business rate reliefs for the 2020/21 financial to 6000 account holders applying reliefs announced by the Government through issuing new bills amounting to £26million.

3.4.2 From 30<sup>th</sup> March, the Business Rates, Economic Growth, IT and Communications Teams developed the systems required to support the process of administering the distribution of £65million of Small Business Grant Funds to 5000 potentially eligible businesses, with registration for applications going live from 4<sup>th</sup> April and first payments being made on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

3.4.3 With staff in the Business Rates Team and support functions working over three consecutive weekends (including the four-day Easter weekend) and extended hours on weekdays, by 5<sup>th</sup> May the Council had paid out £45.875m of Small Business Grants to 4,169 customers which is 84% of our identified total by value and 84% of our customers by number.

3.4.4 This is a huge achievement as North Norfolk was the largest recipient of this funding in Norfolk, with 24% of the total £276million paid to Norfolk authorities; with the next nearest authority receiving 17% of the budget. In the MHCLG return submitted to Government on 4<sup>th</sup> May, we were the 33<sup>rd</sup> highest authority in terms of numbers of grants paid and the 41<sup>st</sup> highest authority in terms of amount of funding paid out to business by value, which is a significant achievement given the size of our team and nature of our business base.

### **3.5 Virtual meetings**

- 3.5.1 In response to Government guidance issued on the conduct of Council business through virtual meetings, the Democratic Services Team has developed systems and processes to allow formal meetings of the Council to be conducted over Zoom and Youtube. By the time of this Cabinet meeting, Cabinet has previously met once using this technology and the Development Committee would have met twice; with a series of online member training / briefing sessions also held on issues relating to our Coronavirus response including Benefits, Business Grants and Homeless Support.

### **3.6 Communications**

- 3.6.1 Throughout the past six weeks, the Council has adopted a variety of communications techniques to deliver messages to residents, business customers, staff and members on how the Council is responding to the Coronavirus emergency.
- 3.6.2 The Council's new Communications and PR Manager has participated in the daily Norfolk Comms Officers briefings to ensure that, at a North Norfolk level, through our website and social media channels, we deliver co-ordinated messages with County partners. This has included messaging on Social Distancing; Staying at Home, Community Support and PPE.
- 3.6.3 At a North Norfolk level we have issued our own messages and press statements on a range of issues including facilities closures, asking tourist visitors and owners of second homes not to travel to North Norfolk at the present time, community support programme and business grants through radio interviews by the Leader, news releases to Archant EDP and North Norfolk News and through our website and social media platforms.
- 3.6.4 In addition the Leader of the Council has recorded a number of video messages to residents shared on the Council's website and we have prepared a number of short videos with staff working at the Local Co-ordination Centres and Food Hub and on the operation of the Community Support Programme. There have also been regular emails to all staff and members through the Leader of the Council and Head of Paid Service / Chief Executive.

### **3.7 Other issues**

- 3.7.1 At various times over the past five weeks, the Head of Paid Service and Leader of the Council have been briefed by County partners of strategic decisions made which could impact on North Norfolk such as the temporary mortuary facility at the Scottow Enterprise Park; use of accommodation at the former Officers Mess (in the Broadland District) at Badersfield for temporary accommodation for local people in housing need and the use of facilities at the Walsingham Shrine as step-down accommodation by people medically fit to leave an acute hospital setting but who cannot immediately return home. In each of these cases prior notice of these developments has been shared with local ward members before such information is placed in the wider public domain / media.

- 3.7.1.1 North Norfolk District Council was not, however, advised in advance by the Home Office of its proposals to accommodate on a temporary basis asylum-seekers at the former Officers Mess at Badersfield and learnt of these proposals through colleagues at Broadland Council and Norfolk Constabulary, who themselves were given very limited advance notice of the use of rooms at the former Officers Mess building for this purpose. Since this use has been established, the District Council has been represented in a multi-agency meeting with partners to understand how this group of asylum-seekers will be supported during their accommodation at Badersfield, which has been helpful in responding to the concerns of local residents.
- 3.7.2 Recognising the potentially significant impact of the Coronavirus restrictions on the local tourism economy at the beginning of the main visitor season and with no clear understanding on the phasing of the lifting of social distancing restrictions, and emerging studies on the impact of Coronavirus on local economies, the Council has commissioned a detailed piece of work on the potential impact on local tourism businesses and proposes drafting a submission to the DCMS Select Committee Inquiry on tourism businesses during May. The Council, through its partner VistNorthNorfolk has also encouraged local tourism businesses to participate in a survey undertaken by Visit East of England, which has achieved good level of return by North Norfolk businesses.
- 3.7.3 The Economic Growth team are also making telephone calls to the District's largest employers to understand the impact of Coronavirus on their operations in the short, medium and longer terms, so that the authority is in a strong position to support the local economy as we move beyond the current Response phase of the pandemic into Recovery.
- 3.7.4 This local economic intelligence is considered critical as two research recent studies have suggested the North Norfolk economy will face significant impact and challenge as a result of the pandemic moving forward, to which the Council and a range of partners will need to respond. The surveys are:-

Centre for Progressive Policy –

<https://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/which-local-authorities-face-biggest-immediate-economic-hit> – which predicts that the North Norfolk economy might see a 39% decline in economic output as a result of Coronavirus.

Royal Society of the Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce - <https://www.thersa.org/about-us/media/2020/one-in-three-jobs-in-parts-of-britain-at-risk-due-to-covid-19-local-data-reveals>, which identifies the North Norfolk District as the 14<sup>th</sup> highest local authority area at risk of job losses due to Coronavirus with 31% of jobs at risk due to the area's dependence on the tourism and hospitality sector.

#### **4. Preparation for Recovery**

- 4.1 As evidence has increased over recent days (end of April) that the UK might have reached the peak of infection, the Council needs to now give thought and detailed planning to leading the local Recovery – for our communities, businesses and as an organisation. This consideration will include the

Council's partnership role within the Norfolk NRF arrangements as well as developing our Recovery response at a district level.

- 4.2 Officers have begun to give thought to how the Council should prepare and lead this Recovery phase of activity including – the opening up of car parks, public toilets, playgrounds etc; the stepping down of the Community Support arrangements, planning the return of staff to their main roles from working at home and redeployment into other roles; re-establishing formal meetings of the Council and critically considering the implications of lockdown and phased lifting of social distancing restrictions, possibly over a number of months, on local businesses, particularly tourism businesses which face having a severely curtailed summer season.
- 4.3 The Council will also need to review its financial position moving forward against its stated aims and ambitions outlined in its Corporate Plan. The context for these considerations, to be progressed over the next three months, is provided in a separate report on this agenda on the financial impact and funding implications of Coronavirus as prepared by the Head of Finance and Assets.

## **5. Alignment with Corporate Plan objectives**

- 5.1 The Coronavirus Pandemic is an unprecedented event of global scale, which has required a significant and co-ordinated response by North Norfolk District Council in seeking to provide support to our communities and businesses at a very challenging time.
- 5.2 It is believed that our staff and members have risen to the challenge of supporting our communities well at this time – representing the very best in public service, supporting our colleagues in the NHS, social care and emergency services in meeting the needs of individuals and communities across North Norfolk. Our Community Support Programme, Food Hub operations, payment of business grants and Hardship Funds and the way we have maintained strong communications messages across a range of channels has been a huge team effort with many staff colleagues deployed into roles which have been new and unfamiliar, whilst other colleagues have worked at home maintaining our normal range of services to our customers and preparing to resume business as usual as the Council moves into the Recovery stage.
- 5.3 Clearly, at this time, as a corporate body, it has not been able to progress with our objectives as laid out in our recently agreed Corporate Plan and it will therefore be necessary to revisit some of these aspirations in the short and longer terms as the Council adapts to the new situation it finds itself in in needing to support businesses recover from this unexpected economic shock, particularly the tourism sector and town centres and high streets. The Council will therefore take stock and refocus its efforts within the six principal objectives of the Corporate Plan and bring back further reports in the coming weeks around our re-shaped priority actions.

## **6. Medium Term Financial Strategy**

- 6.1 The Council's Head of Finance and Assets has prepared a separate report on the funding and financial issues raised by the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic elsewhere on this agenda, so there are no detailed financial comments made in this report detailing the Council's response to this event.

## **7. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 See comments made at 5 above.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 Decisions taken under emergency provisions through delegated powers / authority are detailed at Section 2 of the report.

## **9. Risks**

- 9.1 This report details the Council's response to the global Coronavirus pandemic. Decisions taken have been informed with reference to Government advice and guidance and decisions taken through the Norfolk Local Resilience Forum arrangements in the interests of the North Norfolk community. Options have been considered in the agreement of specific actions, including relevant and associated risks with decisions taken under emergency provisions discussed, agreed and recorded at meetings of the Council's Gold Civil Contingency arrangements with the overriding objectives of protecting public health and life of North Norfolk residents and managing pressure / demands on local NHS capacity, resources and infrastructure.

## **10. Sustainability**

- 10.1 None as a direct result of this report.

## **11. Equality and Diversity**

- 11.1 None as a direct result of this report – many of the actions taken by the Council have however sought to protect and support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities by virtue of their age, frailty, underlying health conditions or housing situation.

## **12. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations**

12.1 None as a direct result of this report.

### **13. Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Cabinet is asked to:-**

**note and comment on the Council's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic; and**

**note and comment upon the preparations being made for Recovery – to include:-**

- **the short-term actions proposed in respect of:-**
  - **opening up the Council's services and facilities;**
  - **transition for the stepping down of the Community Support Programme;**
  - **planning the return of staff to their main roles from working at home and redeployment into other roles;**
  - **re-establishing formal meetings of the Council and**
  - **critically considering the implications of lockdown and phased lifting of social distancing restrictions, possibly over a number of months, on local businesses, particularly tourism businesses which face having a severely curtailed summer season.**
  
- **the longer term need to review the Council's Medium-Term Financial strategy in light of the changing financial situation of the Council and as a result undertake a review of the Council's proposed programme of activity as previously detailed in the Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan.**