

**1. Introduction and Contents**

1.1. In recent months, East Sussex County Council has played an essential role in the response to the coronavirus pandemic. We have worked alongside partners at the local, regional and national level to prevent the spread of coronavirus, save lives and provide emergency support to communities and businesses. What we have needed to deliver has been of a new order. We have innovated at scale to maintain services and adapted quickly to remote delivery and working. We have also started some completely new services and activities.

1.2. As we move from the initial stages of the response, we are working to recover our services and activities that have had to be changed, reduced or paused in the lockdown, in so far as is possible, in line with national guidance for safe working and the need to continue social distancing. This recovery process will take account of the potential for a return to increased restrictions in future waves of infection.

1.3. Recovery will not necessarily mean returning services to how they were before. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the Council's operations, the communities we support and the partners we work with. We will need to evaluate how the pandemic and measures taken in lockdown have impacted immediate demand for our services and how we can best meet this. We will need to consider what activities we have started that will need to continue. We will also take the opportunity to reflect on whether there are activities we have stopped that we should not restart and on whether different ways of working have improved outcomes and productivity that should be retained.

1.4. This appendix sets out the national policy context to this work and the local policy outlook for ESCC, including an early assessment of how the pandemic has impacted the Council's services and how we are planning to recover and reset our activities and priorities in the coming months.

1.5. This appendix includes sections on:

- Overall Context
- Adult Social Care and Health
- Children's Services
- Schools
- Place Services
- Local Democracy
- Supporting Services
- Workforce

**2. Overall Context**

**National COVID-19 Recovery Strategy**

2.1. In May, the Government published a cautious roadmap to 'return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and fairly as possible, in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes.' The plan moved the national pandemic

response from phase 1 'contain, delay, research, mitigate' to phase 2 'smarter controls', with steps to reduce controls on individuals and businesses over the following two months. Phase 3 is 'reliable treatment' and will be entered when there is a viable vaccine or treatment to reduce loss of life.

2.2. Government has set out that the phased lifting of lockdown is reliant on compliance with five tests, which are:

1. Protect the NHS's ability to cope. We must be confident that we are able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment right across the UK.
2. See a sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates from COVID-19 so we are confident that we have moved beyond the peak.
3. Reliable data from SAGE showing that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels across the board.
4. Be confident that the range of operational challenges, including testing capacity and PPE, are in hand, with supply able to meet future demand.
5. Be confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelms the NHS.

2.3. Step 2 of phase 2 began on 1 June with the re-opening of primary schools for years reception, 1 and 6. Throughout June, as Government has determined the five tests for easing lockdown continue to be met, we have seen the phased re-opening of non-essential businesses, gradual re-opening of places of worship and phased return of year 10 and 12 secondary school pupils that have exams next year.

2.4. On 19 June the UK's coronavirus alert level was downgraded from four to three, as the virus is in general circulation but transmission is not high or rising quickly. In light of this, the Government confirmed step 3 of phase 2 could progress on 4 July with the hospitality industry (museums, cinemas, pubs, restaurants and hairdressers) reopening with some restrictions in place. The timetable for further adjustments will depend on continuing to meet the five tests, and the infection risk at each point of review.

2.5. The Strategy sets out that throughout the 'smarter controls' phase people will need to continue to minimise the spread of the disease through good hygiene practices: hand washing, social distancing and regular disinfection of surfaces and Government has emphasised that these measures will be in place for some time. Government is also clear that for the foreseeable future, workers should continue to work from home wherever possible. These requirements will continue to affect the way we work and deliver services.

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

2.6. Since the start of the pandemic, adequate supply of PPE has underpinned the safe and effective delivery of public services. This will remain the case for some time and there will continue to be high demand nationally and internationally for PPE until we find a reliable treatment or vaccine for COVID-19.

2.7. Supply of PPE has improved in East Sussex, and our procurement team has made good progress on building a supply chain and stock.

2.8. A central online PPE portal is being rolled out by Government, starting with access for small care providers, which will reduce reliance on deliveries of PPE through the Local Resilience Forums. As new arrangements come into effect, we will review the need to continue with the County Council-led local support but will only withdraw when there is confidence in the supply to the care sector and others requiring PPE.

### Economic Outlook

2.9. In April, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) assessed the potential impact of coronavirus on the UK economy and public finances. The OBR's analysis was based on a three-month lockdown scenario, where economic activity gradually returned to normal over the following three months. It was updated in May but before Government announced its plans for easing lockdown, so this is not reflected in the modelling.

<b>OBR scenario</b>				
Updated 14 May	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	2020	2020-21
Real GDP (percentage change on previous period)	-35%	27%	-12.8%	
Unemployment rate (per cent)	10%	8.5%	7.3%	
Public Sector Net Borrowing (£ billion)*				£298.4bn
Public Sector Net Debt (Per cent of GDP)				95.8%

\*Often referred to as the deficit

2.10. The scenario projected a sharp fall in national economic output (GDP) in Q2 (April, May and June) of 2020, due to closure of businesses and requirements to stay home in the lockdown, followed by recovery in Q3 (July, August and September). For the year, however, GDP was projected to shrink by nearly 13%. The OBR will next update their coronavirus scenario on 14 July.

2.11. The projected fall in national economic output, along with the increase in public expenditure to support services, incomes and businesses will undoubtedly influence Government's plans for future public expenditure. An announcement or emergency budget to set national fiscal policy for the immediate term is expected in early July and a Spending Review later this year.

2.12. The pandemic has also increased unemployment and the number of people claiming benefits. In May 2020, 20,775 people were claiming Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance because they were unemployed and actively seeking work in East Sussex, which is an increase of 11,640 since March 2020 (up 127%). Claimant numbers have increased by 160% since May 2019 and are at their highest since April 1993. The true extent of the impact of the pandemic on employment levels in the county may not, however, be clear until later this year when the coronavirus job retention scheme (furlough) ends.

2.13. The immediate recession and potential longer-term economic downturn resulting from the pandemic will have a profound impact on the prosperity and wellbeing of our residents and is likely to drive a new need for our services which we will need to take account of in our RPPR planning.

## Brexit

2.14. The UK left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020 and entered a transition period which is set to end on 31 December 2020. Negotiations to agree a deal for our future trading relationship with the EU re-started in April after a pause at the start of the pandemic. There is, however, a possibility that an agreement will not be reached and the UK will exit the transition period without a trade deal.

2.15. If later this year it becomes likely we will not reach a trade deal with the EU, we would expect national and local government to step up planning for any impact of no trade deal on our borders, businesses, procurement, and ability to deliver public services. This may involve Local Resilience Forums at the same time as they are playing a core role in the COVID-19 pandemic response which would be a considerable challenge. This could also require trading standards to undertake new regulatory activities, including at Newhaven Port, which would stretch capacity and could have associated costs.

## Devolution

2.16. The Government has committed to agreeing more devolution deals in England. Prior to the pandemic, in the December 2019 Queen's Speech, the Government announced it would publish an English Devolution White Paper to 'unleash the potential' of all English regions by increasing the number of mayors and doing more devolution deals across 'functional economic areas' to level up powers and investment. The White Paper would also include plans for 'spending and regional growth funding', which indicated the Shared Prosperity Fund – intended to replace EU Regional Development Funds – would be linked to these proposals.

2.17. In June, in response to a Parliamentary question the Local Government Minister confirmed a Devolution White Paper will be published in the autumn setting out plans for economic recovery and renewal, and that plans would include restructuring local institutions to deliver these outcomes, establishing more mayors and more unitary councils.

## **3. Adult Social Care and Health**

### Coronavirus Impact and Recovery

3.1. ESCC has maintained provision of Adult Social Care services wherever possible in the pandemic, including through more virtual processes/ contact with clients. Our business continuity plan, which covered key risks and mitigations in the case of pandemic flu, has been adapted and deployed. We have continued to meet our statutory duties and have not had to implement Care Act easements. There has, however, been significant disruption to our services and it will take some time to restore these to business as usual and to deal with backlogs that have built up.

3.2. Since March 2020, all parts of the social care sector have been responding to the pandemic, including making changes to service delivery to care for the most vulnerable people in our population during lockdown, physical distancing, shielding and isolation, as well as to discharge pathways to rapidly allow for surge capacity in hospitals within our system. In East Sussex this has been supported by regular communication and sharing of information and guidance, training and good practice,

and daily monitoring of the sector to support business continuity and provide rapid multi-disciplinary support in emergency situations. This has included specific steps taken by the County Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to alleviate short-term financial pressure on care homes, home care, extra care, Direct Payments and Personal Assistants and commissioned services as a result of responding to COVID-19.

3.3. Our care sector has reported high levels of ongoing concern about PPE, workforce challenges and the impact on short-, medium- and long-term financial outlook caused by COVID-19 and the ongoing need to prevent and control infection. We will continue to work as a whole health and social care system to manage existing and new challenges and requirements as they arise from COVID-19 and deliver co-ordinated support to enable our local independent care sector to provide safe, effective care for our population. This will focus on all aspects of social care, including care homes, home care, Personal Assistants, Extra Care, and supported housing, and for the Council will be managed alongside significant financial risks that have arisen from the pandemic.

3.4. Responding to the pandemic has generated substantial unplanned costs and demand pressures. For Adult Social Care, the most significant of these include purchase of PPE for services; supporting the care market, including 10% per month additional support to care providers in line with Government guidelines; and costs associated with additional demand for services from hospital leavers.

3.5. In terms of our services, there has been an improvement to some outcomes, client experience and productivity as a result of more virtual working, which we will look to retain in future. For example, there has been an increase in delivery of care assessments and reduction in waiting times for reviews of support plans through remote assessment. There has also been a slight uplift in the numbers of people accessing substance misuse treatment. Similarly, the rapid establishment of shielding support and Community Hubs to provide emergency support and advice for vulnerable residents (see 3.16-3.22 below) required an agility in approach and delivery across all tiers of local government and partnerships that we will want to replicate in future working.

3.6. Some services, however, cannot as easily be adapted to remote working and more consideration will need to be given to how these can operate effectively with an ongoing need for social distancing. This includes occupational therapy clinics, blue badge clinics, day services for older people and the skills development and employment pathway for people with learning disabilities, which had to temporarily close.

3.7. We anticipate the easing of the lockdown could result in a surge in demand for some services, including support for victims of domestic violence, substance misuse services and support for mental health. Increased demand for these services could also be sustained if we enter a period of economic downturn or recession.

3.8. In the coming months we will review our activities across all services and operations to consider how to best meet the new needs of our clients and residents, retain improvements to service outcomes and delivery that have resulted from

working differently, and ensure resilience of services to potential future waves of infection and lockdowns. The review will cover:

- working arrangements – looking to retain the mix of IT-enabled remote and office-based working that has improved outcomes and productivity;
- integrated working arrangements with the NHS – the established integration programme between health and social care in East Sussex has strengthened our local response to the emergency. We will assess where integrated working, for example the new Community Discharge Hubs to support rapid discharge of patients from hospital into more appropriate settings, could be retained to enhance our work in the future;
- how we deliver prevention and manage demand, including next steps on Community Hubs (see 3.16-3.22 below);
- reviewing the role of our directly provided services to consider how we support the whole care sector and their business continuity, respond to new models of integrated care and deal with ongoing requirements to manage a response to COVID-19;
- continue to develop arrangements for how people access and receive support that takes account of integration with health, digital opportunities and partnership working with the voluntary and community sector and Borough and District Councils that reduces demand for funded personal care support;
- reviewing commissioned services in partnership with providers through taking account of the learning through the pandemic response and new responsibilities for broader support of care markets; and
- considering how we work with partners to deliver our community safety priorities, taking account of learning through the pandemic and opportunities presented by the development of community hubs and new ways of working.

3.9. The review will involve detailed engagement with staff, clients, carers, delivery partners and stakeholders and any decisions on changes to services will be taken by Members.

#### Care Home Support and Resilience Plan

3.10. Supply of social care provision has come under real pressure in East Sussex in the first months of the pandemic, with several local providers unable to accept new referrals at any one time.

3.11. We have provided a suite of support for providers. This includes a daily bulletin, regular web-based provider forums, a dedicated email address for questions and issues and a dedicated email address for raising PPE shortages, upon which we have prioritised allocation. We have also provided financial support to protect providers' cashflow and help meet additional costs, including a 10% uplift payment for the period 1 April to 30 June 2020 for existing residential and nursing home placements.

3.12. Work to support care homes has formed part of our wider system response to COVID-19 since the beginning of the emergency in March. We have had in place an integrated health and social care plan in East Sussex which delivers the objectives set out in the Department of Health and Social Care (DH&SC) COVID-19 Adult Social Care Action Plan. This includes testing all patients before admission to a care home. Patients testing positive are supported through a period of isolation at either Bexhill Care Centre or in a community health unit before moving, when clear, to a care home. This helps give care homes the reassurance they require to accept discharges and maintain the required flow of patients from hospital.

3.13. The full range of work being taken forward by our health and social care system to support care homes to provide safe and effective care was set out in our East Sussex Care Home Resilience Plan, which was submitted to Government on 29 May 2020. This covers actions being undertaken by ESCC and East Sussex CCG on infection prevention and control, training, PPE, reducing workforce movement, quarantining, stepping up NHS clinical support, comprehensive testing and building the workforce.

3.14. Government has allocated a £600m Infection Control Fund nationally to support adult social care providers to reduce the rate of transmission in and between care homes and support wider workforce resilience. ESCC has been allocated £10.7m based on the number of registered care home beds in the county during May 2020. The grant will be paid in two equal instalments in May 2020 and July 2020. ESCC must allocate 75% of each month's funding straight to care homes in East Sussex on a 'per bed' basis, including to social care providers with whom we do not have existing contracts. Receipt of funding is reliant on providers having completed the Capacity Tracker at least once and receipt of further funding is reliant on consistent completion of the tracker. There is an expectation for local authorities to undertake assurance that providers have used the money for the purposes it was provided and if this is not the case, the authority is expected to take reasonable steps to recover the money that has not been so used. ESCC has discretion to allocate the remaining 25% of that month's funding to care homes or to domiciliary care providers and to support wider workforce resilience in relation to COVID-19 infection control.

3.15. The Infection Control Fund is part of a wider Care Homes Support Package from Government to support the social care sector in its response to COVID-19. Government has established a taskforce to oversee delivery of this package and of the DH&SC Social Care Action Plan. As part of its work, the taskforce will set out advice to the Minister of State for Social Care on what needs to be in place in the care sector in England to respond to COVID-19 ahead of winter. This may have implications for ESCC and our local care providers.

#### Shielding and Community Hubs

3.16. 21,000 East Sussex residents have been identified by the NHS as being extremely clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and were asked to 'shield' during lockdown (not leave their homes and minimise all non-essential contact with other members of their household). Of these, approximately 11,000 have asked for extra support.

3.17. ESCC has had a significant role in supporting these people. We have proactively contacted residents in the shielding group to determine if they require support and have maintained a shielding helpline that at its peak was operating from 8am-8pm 7 days per week. We also conducted follow-up calls to a large number of residents. In response to the issues raised on these calls we have directly provided food boxes (where the Government's provision fails, residents have specific needs or there is an urgent/additional need for support), provided wellbeing and care support, arranged pharmacy collections, and arranged other ad-hoc support. At the end of May, ESCC had spent just under £250k on food distribution for this group. From 1 June we piloted a model, with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, where shopping was delivered to residents rather than food boxes.

3.18. Additionally, a much wider group of residents have required support of some description to manage life under the COVID-19 restrictions. The five Community Hubs have provided support to this group, reinforcing and complimenting a huge and unknown level of support provided by local communities to those in need. The five Community Hubs are led by the East Sussex Borough and District Councils with their local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations (VCSE). ESCC's role has been to coordinate, support, convene and give space for local community capacity.

3.19. Support for people shielding and Community Hubs were established at pace and are a manifestation of strong collaborative working between the public, VCSE organisations and communities in East Sussex. The models of support are, however, reliant on redeployed and volunteer staff in all East Sussex Councils.

3.20. We are considering what shape this support should take in future. From 6 July, people shielding are able to spend time outdoors in a group of up to 6 people, while maintaining social distancing, and single people are able to form a 'support bubble' with another household. Government's shielding support will remain in place until the end of July to provide time to adjust to changes. From 1 August, unless there are significant rises in cases, the shielding programme will be paused and clinically extremely vulnerable people will be able to visit shops and places of worship and attend work. The food and medicine boxes facilitated by the National Shielding Service will stop.

3.21. The change to guidance on shielding is based on the latest scientific evidence which shows the chance of encountering the virus in the community continues to decline. However, pausing of the programme is reliant on cases not significantly rising. The categorisation of 'clinically extremely vulnerable' will remain in place indefinitely and community transmission will continue to be closely monitored and the Government will tighten advice to this cohort as needed. If this happens, what support would be in place and whether councils will need to step in to bolster support, is uncertain.

3.22. As part of the ASC Recovery Plan we will work with partners to consider what level/type of ongoing support is required and how we can maintain it and manage its costs when staff are redeployed back into their usual roles. The opportunity for

Community Hubs to provide an ongoing preventative/ early intervention role in local communities will also be explored.

#### National Test and Trace Programme

3.23. On 28 May, the Government launched the national test and trace programme. It is now possible for anyone in England who has symptoms to get tested for COVID-19. Those who test positive are asked for details of people they have been in close contact with and places they have visited over the last seven days, either by a contact tracer, by a text or by email. Once they have given those details, those contacts will then be alerted by phone, text or email and depending on their level of risk and will be instructed to isolate for up to 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms.

#### Local Outbreak Control Plans

3.24. East Sussex County Council has produced a COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan, as required by the Government, to prevent cases of the virus where possible in East Sussex and to respond to any local outbreaks.

3.25. The plan will continue to evolve as guidance is received from Government. The plan covers the following areas:

- Care homes and schools
- High risk places, settings and communities
- Testing
- Contact tracing
- Integrated data
- Supporting vulnerable people
- Governance

3.26. Planning to prevent and respond to cases of COVID-19 in our communities requires a whole system and multi-agency approach, including the Government's Test and Trace programme. A wide range of stakeholders have contributed and commented on this plan and will continue to shape its development. More detail on operational delivery elements will be added to the Outbreak Control Plan as more guidance is produced nationally and as the national Joint Biosecurity Centre becomes fully operational.

3.27. The Health and Wellbeing Board is the local accountable body for leading the delivery of the plan and the Board includes County Council and Borough and District members. £300m funding has been allocated to support the development of these plans, which will be distributed based on public health grants to local authorities and £2.5m has been allocated to East Sussex. Our Local Outbreak Management Plan will be considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 14 July 2020.

#### Integrating health and social care

3.28. There is now a single East Sussex CCG, and 12 Primary Care Networks, enabling the Council and the CCG to work together and explore taking forward an integrated approach to commissioning health and social care outcomes for our population. Our East Sussex Health and Social Care System partnership consists of East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust and

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, working with our wider system including Primary Care Networks, District and Borough Councils, Healthwatch and the voluntary and community sector. The key aim we share as health and social care organisations in East Sussex is to improve the health, health inequalities and wellbeing of local people, and make the best use of our combined resources, through more integrated care and an enhanced focus on prevention and re-ablement after episodes of ill-health.

3.29. Through our East Sussex Health and Social Care Plan we have set out the priority developments we need to work on collectively to meet the health and care needs of our population, over the next 3-5 years. This is also the East Sussex contribution to the wider Sussex Health and Care Partnership Strategy to help achieve NHS Long Term Plan ambitions. We will need to review our plans in light of the recent learning from responding to COVID-19, and the need to continue to manage existing and new challenges and requirements as they arise so that our response is coordinated and provides safe, effective care to our population. This includes making a start as an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) in East Sussex to enable greater levels of collaboration across health and social care provision and commissioning. Together with our integrated health and social care outcomes commissioning this will help us to deliver improved outcomes and reduce health inequalities for our population.

#### **4. Children's Services**

4.1. Throughout the pandemic, the department has monitored a range of indicators to assess the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on Children's Service's activity and need:

- *Front Door contacts* - We have seen a reduction in activity in the front door teams but since mid-May have seen referral rates picking up again. The social work teams have RAG rated all the vulnerable young children working with colleagues in schools and Standards and Learning Effectiveness Services to maintain oversight
- *Children on Child Protection (CP) Plans* - The number of children on CP plans has increased from 542 week commencing 9 March to 586 week beginning 15 June. This is in part due to CP plans not ceasing as it is difficult to step down safely at this time
- *Looked After Children* – numbers have remained level. Several programmes about new service models for accommodating Children in Care have been paused. Work has now commenced to consider the No Wrong Door Approach, the Attachment Programme and an Expansion of the Family Group Conference Programme
- *Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children* - concerns around COVID-19 infection in the migrant camps around Calais and Brexit has seen a significant increase in migrants making their way to this country, and particularly Kent. Kent County Council have asked all authorities to help by offering placements. East Sussex has also seen an increase locally so it is anticipated numbers

could rise considerably during 2020/21 particularly if a mandatory transfer scheme is introduced.

4.2. The department has also undertaken an assessment with local universities on where there may be increased need for support for vulnerable children as lockdown is eased and we will use this and the monitoring we have undertaken to inform priorities for our services in recovery.

4.3. Remote and virtual working has the potential to improve delivery and productivity through reducing the need to travel long distances to undertake physical visits and reduce need for travel for training and 'professional to professional' meetings. This however, must be balanced with effectiveness of interventions. We will also need to ensure staff are appropriately supported to do their jobs remotely, particularly Newly Qualified Social Workers.

#### Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing

4.4. There is considerable concern about the impact of lockdown on children's emotional wellbeing as they do not have access to friends, wider family and support networks. At the extreme end there is concern of higher levels of self-harm and suicide.

4.5. Work has been ongoing with partners to plan for an increase in work as lockdown eases. Running alongside this has been the publication of the Sussex-wide review of Emotional Health and Wellbeing support of children and young people which has identified a range of recommendations to improve the nature and quality of services to this group of children and young people. This work will complement the actions being taken by partners in response to Joint Targeted Area Inspection of multi agencies responses to Children's mental health in East Sussex, which was published in April 2020 following a February inspection.

### **5. Schools**

5.1. As part of national measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, all schools and nurseries in East Sussex were closed from Friday 20 March, with limited school places for children of key workers and vulnerable children and young people. To support sustainability, East Sussex paid an additional £177,500 to support those nurseries, pre-schools and childminders who remained open.

5.2. To support remote learning, the Department for Education (DfE) provided digital devices (laptops and tablets) and internet access for disadvantaged children and with partners we funded 200 supplementary devices for disadvantaged year 10 pupils in maintained schools.

#### Vulnerable Groups

5.3. As part of our duty for safeguarding children and supporting schools to safeguard vulnerable children and young people (0-25), we have undertaken a vulnerable children risk assessment. Each school was sent the list of children in their school and asked to respond to a series of questions including whether the child was attending school, what contact the school has had with the child/family and whether any risks have been highlighted. Support is provided to schools to manage remote

safeguarding arrangements, but for some children, where social care determine that they would be safer in school or college, we support schools to offer appropriate provision.

5.4. The vulnerable children risk assessment process has been completed in two cohorts. Cohort 1 was every child and young person in East Sussex with a social worker, with an EHCP and/or who is a Young Carer. Around 6,300 children and young people have moved through the Cohort 1 risk assessment process. In East Sussex, 7.2% of vulnerable children across all phases are attending (the national is about 5%).

5.5. Cohort 2 was high risk Cohort 1 cases (identified by the Steering Group); new Child in Need and Child Protection cases and newly issued EHCPs since Cohort 1; children open to ISEND where ISEND have concerns regarding increased risk due to lockdown and children and young people where ESCC has agreed to issue an EHCP. Schools, settings and colleges have also been invited to add children and young people to their Cohort 2 list who do not have an EHCP and have a diagnosis (or are on the pathway for diagnosis) of neurodevelopmental issues, such as Autism or ADHD, sensory processing or attachment; where lockdown could escalate difficulties and impact on wellbeing.

#### Re-opening Schools

5.6. Since 1 June, early years providers and primary schools in East Sussex have been open to reception and years 1 and 6, with measures in place for social distancing. Since 15 June, secondary schools have been open for year 10 and 12 pupils that have exams next year. Attendance numbers have been increasing throughout June and 13,102 pupils attended school in East Sussex week commencing 22 June, which represents 27% of all primary pupils, 6% of secondary and 22% of special school pupils. We will continue to support headteachers with safely welcoming children back to school and to plan for re-opening of schools to all years in September, which will be a considerable challenge. Guidance for full reopening of schools was published by the Department for Education on 2 July and we will support schools with implementation in East Sussex. There is significant work to be done to ready schools over the summer.

5.7. On Friday 19 June, Government announced a £1bn fund to help children catch up on school missed in the lockdown period. £350m of the funding is intended to give the most disadvantaged pupils access to tutors over the next academic year. Primary and secondary schools will be given £650m to spend on one-to-one or group tuition for any pupils they think need it. At the time of writing, we await more details on how the funding will be allocated and what it can be used for.

#### Home to School Transport

5.8. The Home to School Transport Team are making safe arrangements for pupils that require Home to School Transport to return to school. Risk assessments have been undertaken for all pupils attending and due to return to special schools. Operators have been provided with guidance and PPE has been supplied for crews that cannot maintain social distancing on board vehicles, with weekly kits prepared at County Hall for operators to collect.

5.9. Transport Officers are also preparing safe arrangements for those clients who require transport to attend day centres as they begin their phased return.

## **6. Place Services**

### **Coronavirus Impact and Recovery**

6.1. Many services in the Communities, Economy and Transport directorate have continued to operate virtually during the first months of the pandemic, with some staff re-deployed from their usual area of work to support areas of high demand. Household Waste Recycling Centres were closed at the start of the emergency but were supported to re-open in May with restrictions in place to allow social distancing. The following sections set out the primary areas where we will continue to adjust and respond to the pandemic and will be the areas of focus for recovery.

### **Libraries and Information Service**

6.2. Libraries will start to reopen during step 3 of the lockdown easing, currently expected to take place in early July. Plans are being developed to initially open five libraries to ensure we can provide a safe service for both staff and customers. Subject to the successful operation of these, further libraries may open later in the summer/early autumn. We will also be re-establishing the Home Library Service.

6.3. During the lockdown period the eLibrary (our online offer) provided services. The offer was improved, and staff provided promotional updates, 'how to' guides and telephone support to people unfamiliar with the eLibrary. This led to a significant increase in eBook and eAudiobook loans, usage of online newspapers and magazines - roughly double the pre-COVID levels and there has been a large spike in new members joining online since we closed. We are delivering our Learning Services offer (IT, maths and English courses and qualifications) remotely and exploring what other parts of our offer could be delivered virtually or in person (with social distancing in place) in future.

6.4. Libraries staff have been involved in supporting the Registration Service, Adult Social Care's food delivery scheme and work to make calls to the shielded. Most of these staff will need to return to normal duties as the library service reopens.

### **Registration Services**

6.5. The service was providing death registrations only during the lockdown period. Work is now underway with the regulator and neighbouring registration services to establish the best ways to recover from the backlog of Births, Notices and Ceremonies that have been building up since March, whilst maintaining death registration provision. With no weddings or ceremonies taking place during the lockdown period, and significant uncertainty over the ability of approved marriage premises to reopen it is likely that wedding income for this year will be negligible.

### **Trading Standards and re-opening retail premises**

6.6. Trading Standards scaled back its proactive work with businesses, visits and compliance work (except for high-risk areas such as animal welfare and rogue traders) at the height of the pandemic. This was substituted by the large increase in work advising on, and investigating, business closure restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Officers have been continuing with ongoing investigations remotely as far

as possible and have increased support for scams victims, identifying and advising on the new variety of scams emanating from the pandemic. Trading Standards have also been proactive in monitoring the market regarding PPE as well as supporting ESCC, Sussex Police and the CCG with procurement of such items.

6.7. Trading Standards and environmental health have worked closely together during the pandemic and a single point of contact has been established to enable queries and concerns about compliance from businesses and residents to be managed effectively. This will continue.

6.8. The end of the EU Exit transition period at the end of December 2020 is likely to increase the requirements on Trading Standards in terms of additional import controls and the need to support business transition to a new regulatory framework, independent of the EU.

#### Resilience and Emergency Planning

6.9. The Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) must provide a coordination and communications role in supporting the multi-agency response to the pandemic, including emergency PPE and death management. The nature of the pandemic means we are likely to transition in and out of response and recovery.

6.10. The SRF will have a light touch coordination and communication role in the recovery phase. The recovery phase will be local authority led and will focus on local recovery; focussed on the three parts of Sussex rather than the whole. Where there is a role for a pan-Sussex response, this will be co-ordinated by a Recovery Coordinating Group overseen by the Executive Group chaired by the Chief Executive, supported by the chief executives of partner agencies across Sussex.

6.11. Looking further ahead, the SRF may be required to respond in case of a no deal Brexit at the beginning of next year.

#### Household Waste Recycling Sites

6.12. Household Waste Recycling Sites re-opened on 18 May, with restricted vehicular access and reduced number of un-loading bays to allow for social distancing, only accepting household waste and recycling. Restrictions reduced on 2 July, with vans allowed on all sites twice a week and chargeable waste (plasterboard, soil, hardcore, tyres and asbestos) accepted. We will continue to review the operation of sites and look to ease the remaining restrictions when safe and appropriate.

#### Highways and Transport

6.13. Work continued on highways maintenance during the lockdown and the Highways Service was able to provide a near normal service, whilst maintaining safe-distancing and ensuring the safety of the workforce and public. The roads patching programme and resurfacing programme has progressed to plan. Work on the Newhaven Port Access Road project also continued throughout the lockdown period.

6.14. The Government announced the bringing forward of previously announced funding for measures to encourage cycling and walking in May. East Sussex will

receive £2.4m of funding in two tranches. Plans for use of the first tranche of £470k were submitted on 5 June and covered new signage and pop-up walking and cycling measures.

6.15. The remaining tranche will be used for more permanent improvements and measures to manage movement of people on the roads and pavements in the context of ongoing outbreaks of COVID-19. At time of drafting this report we do not know when this second tranche will be released.

6.16. The changes in the amount of travel people undertake and the modes of transport used, arising from the pandemic, will need to be considered as part of Local Transport Plan 4. This includes the impact on our public transport routes. Local bus companies received some support as part of the Government's emergency response to the pandemic, but there remain questions about their longer-term viability in a context where people are being discouraged from using public transport. Whilst walking and cycling will be important in towns, consideration will need to be given to how access to services is supported in rural areas.

6.17. The council has continued to pay its suppliers during the COVID-19 period in line with Government Cabinet Office guidance, but at the time of writing this report it is uncertain how much longer these payments will need to be maintained, and when full services can be resumed. This is particularly relevant to buses where patronage remains low.

#### Transport for the South East

6.18. Work on the Transport for the South East Transport Strategy and the proposal to government have continued during this period with a successful Board meeting held virtually in April where Board members agreed the draft version of the Strategy.

6.19. A further Board meeting in July will finalise both the strategy and proposal which will then be submitted to Government. A decision on this year's Department for Transport grant funding allocation for the technical programme is expected soon.

#### Economy

6.20. The impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on East Sussex businesses have been significant and will be ongoing. Whilst much financial support has been provided by Government, this will be reduced as recovery begins. The short- and long-term impact of the pandemic on our national and local economy will be significant.

6.21. Business East Sussex, part of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership South East Business Hub has been providing support and advice to East Sussex businesses during this time.

6.22. The economic development team have been working locally to support Team East Sussex to understand the stresses emerging in our businesses and set out priorities and plans to help the East Sussex economy emerge stronger and more robust than before the pandemic. Following extensive consultation, an East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan is being developed based on the following ambitions and proposals:

- Capitalise on digital connectivity
- Attract new inward investment
- Re-start the visitor economy
- Expand low carbon transport and energy infrastructure
- Help local businesses adapt, recover and grow
- Retain our skills infrastructure, support employment, build workforce resilience
- Local supplier and procurement opportunities
- Adapt and improve place making

6.23. The ERP once complete, will perform a number of functions. It will:

- Co-ordinate all economic recovery activity of partners;
- Become a bidding document that we will use to secure anticipated financial support from Government;
- Provide a means through which the East Sussex business community (which in addition to traditional private enterprise, also includes cultural institutions, social enterprises voluntary and community sectors) can galvanise its efforts in recovery; and
- Provide a lobbying document for use particularly with Government and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to articulate our needs.

6.24. The impact of COVID-19 on 16-24 year olds is of particular concern, and calls are being made for a national strategy for pathways to employment and progression with input across the Government. Skills East Sussex, which brings together business representatives from the various sectors who work with training providers to develop courses based on their needs, is heavily involved in developing the actions required to respond to this concern. This will form an important arm of the Economy Recovery Plan, and the East Sussex College Group has already committed £1m from its Adult Education Budget to retrain people who have lost jobs through the lockdown.

6.25. Our East Sussex cultural sector has suffered during this crisis. These organisations contribute much to both our local economy and provide outreach to support wellbeing, provide volunteering opportunities and generate significant tourism footfall. Some have launched fundraising/crowdfunding campaigns and sought to secure grants from other arts and cultural bodies. Most are considering some opening in 2020 as a loss leader, but it is likely many may not be able to fully open for business until Spring 2021, if they can survive this period.

#### Climate change

6.26. The Councils' corporate Climate Emergency Plan and the Environment Strategy were agreed by Cabinet on 3 June. These cover both the Council's actions to reduce its impact on the climate and environment and the work it is doing in partnership with others. These were developed in the pre-COVID-19 environment and some of the positive lessons about travel and work patterns will need to be considered for the future.

6.27. Our ambitions for carbon neutrality also need to be embedded within our business and financial planning. As part of this State of the County report, Cabinet are asked to consider whether our test priority outcome 'making best use of

resources', which is the priority applied to all activities and the touchstone for all that we do, should be expanded to "making best use of resources in the short and long term" to better reflect that the Council's decisions should be guided by a test priority that we ensure sustainability of our resources, both in terms of money and environmental assets.

## **7. Local democracy**

7.1. Local democratic accountability and transparency have been maintained throughout the COVID-19 restrictions. Arrangements to hold Member meetings remotely under the new regulations were rapidly put in place, enabling core business to continue in a robust and open way. Public access to remote meetings has been arranged via our existing webcasting site and agendas for remote meetings are being published as normal.

7.2. Virtual meetings of the County Council, Cabinet and a number of other committees and boards have taken place using the technology and remote meetings procedures we have put in place to support these. As we move forward, lessons from this new way of working could be applied in a post COVID-19 world to enable local democracy to operate more flexibly if the legislation allows. Longer-term, a level of remote working has the potential to offer different options for Member participation, reductions in travel and ways to broaden engagement, for example in scrutiny work.

7.3. The ongoing role of Members in community leadership and amplifying both strengths and challenges in their divisions will continue to play a vital part in informing the Council's ongoing response to COVID-19 and how the learning is taken forward into recovery and future service delivery.

7.4. The next County Council election is scheduled to take place in May 2021. Work will take place over the coming year to provide information to prospective candidates about the Council's work and the role of a county councillor through our 'Be a councillor' campaign. A comprehensive induction programme will be prepared for newly elected councillors to support them in taking up their roles. Learning from the COVID-19 experience will be built into the practical support and development offered to all Members. We will work closely with district and borough councils, who administer the election on behalf of the County Council, on the statutory election process.

## **8. Workforce**

8.1. Following the Government's 'stay at home' message, the Council moved quickly to support all staff to work from home where this was appropriate to their role. Routine projects to upgrade ICT software and refresh equipment were already well progressed and this enabled the majority of staff to work remotely with relative ease.

8.2. It was, however, recognised that working from home on a continual basis could have an impact on staff mental wellbeing, particularly around feelings of isolation and/or anxiety. The Council already has a firm commitment to supporting the wellbeing of staff with a range of innovative initiatives having been implemented over recent years. Our 'Time to TALK' campaign and related resources provide the

cornerstone of our approach. Specifically, in response to COVID-19, we further promoted and re-purposed this campaign, including utilising our 100+ Mental Health First Aiders to support virtual team meetings and the offer of 1-1 support sessions.

8.3. We have also used the Council's staff communications platform 'Yammer' to host a dedicated wellbeing campaign with a different theme each week. For example, week 1 focussed on emotional support, week 4 on managing remote teams and week 7 on self-care and support. We have a dedicated Wellbeing Intranet page which hosts a wealth of information and signposts to resources on a variety of subjects to support staff during this challenging time.

8.4. During the pandemic, the direct experiences for some of our staff have been significant and potentially traumatic, particularly for those working in a residential setting. The impact will vary considerably due to different roles and personal situations. If these are not addressed, these challenges could lead to long term consequences, both in terms of the health and wellbeing of our staff and in relation to retention issues in the future. In response to this, in addition to the resources and initiatives outlined above, an offer based around coaching on both a group and individual basis is currently being developed. The intention is to use experienced coaches to offer facilitated sessions to consider an approach of compassionate leadership, providing the opportunity for managers to share expertise and best practice whilst also enabling specific challenges they are facing to be explored.

8.5. At an early stage, a Council-wide 'staff deployment' scheme was agreed, enabling staff from across the Council to volunteer to be deployed into a Team/Service requiring additional staff capacity in order to maintain critical services. At the time of writing, approximately 155 staff have been deployed into a range of roles such as distribution of PPE, food delivery, contacting residents in the shielded group, providing support to the Community Hubs and driving duties. In addition, staff have also been deployed within departments. For example, in Adult Social Care and Health, staff within Learning Disability Services moved from Day Centres into Residential Services in order to keep those critical services operating.

8.6. The Council has seen relatively low levels of sickness absence. Between the end of March to the beginning of June, 236 staff had been absent as a consequence of COVID-19 and 126 staff have self-isolated (this does not include those staff who were self-isolating but well enough to work from home).

8.7. As the easing of the lockdown restrictions continue, the Council is planning the future working arrangements and the safe return to the workplace of those services where there is a need for them to resume as soon as possible for the public. In order to help managers consider how they will manage a return to work for their Team, a comprehensive advice and information pack has been prepared. This contains:

- a guide for managers working in one of the 'hub' buildings (County Hall, St Mary's House, St Mark's House and Ocean House);
- a guide for managers working in any 'satellite' building;
- workplace FAQs for hub buildings;
- workplace FAQs for satellite buildings;

- HR FAQs;
- a building occupancy survey form;
- an individual risk assessment for managers to complete for staff that could be more vulnerable to COVID-19 health impacts due to demographic factors (age, biological gender, ethnicity and weight), to identify reasonable steps that should be taken to control risks in the workplace; and
- a new e-learning course which we will be asking those staff who will be returning to the workplace to complete before they do so.

8.8. Looking ahead, it is critical that we ensure we use the lessons learned from COVID-19 to inform our future workforce planning arrangements. The overwhelming success of our remote working arrangements have provided us with the opportunity to reconsider how we best use our office spaces as well as future working arrangements. Our reset and recovery planning will include considerations around working practices and models of service delivery. Whilst it is still too early to assess with any certainty what the impact of the last 3 months will be on our recruitment and retention position, it is likely that we will see a greater level of interest in jobs with the Council, particularly in the event of recession. The success of our remote working arrangements will also enable us to attract and secure applicants from a much wider geography, including outside of East Sussex, than we have done traditionally.

## **9. Supporting Services**

### **Orbis Partnership**

9.1. East Sussex and Surrey County Councils have been working in partnership on business services since 2015 through Orbis. Brighton & Hove City Council joined the partnership in May 2017 and Business Services budgets were integrated in April 2018. The partnership has achieved £12.9m ongoing savings between 2016/17 and 2019/20 for the partner councils. A further £8.2m of one-off savings have also been delivered by the partnership. The Orbis Business Plan 2021 sets out the further savings target for 2020/21.

9.2. Orbis has been through a period of review and refresh to ensure the partnership fits the requirements of each sovereign partner. Several changes were implemented during 2019/20 and the new operating model started in April 2020 accompanied by a new Inter-Authority Agreement signed by the three partners.

9.3. All services delivered through the Partnership have made important contributions in supporting the County Council to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and move to agile and remote ways of working. We have benefitted from investment that the Council has made in the IT infrastructure, as well as ensuring HR, finance, procurement and IT service support focus on the needs of the Council's front-line delivery services.

9.4. For 2020/21 we will have both an internal focus on how we run the partnership but more importantly a customer focus on meeting the needs and priorities of the three partner councils as they focus on recovery. Key areas that we are focussing on are:

- adoption and implementation of digital technologies to support Council priorities and developments in service delivery and service user experience through the recovery activity;
- enhance remote and agile working through exploitation of technology and further building the digital skills and confidence of the Council's workforce; and
- using digital technology to improve business processes and minimise dependency on manual and paper-based activity that ties services to buildings.

#### Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES)

9.5. SPACES is a partnership between local authorities, emergency services, health services and several Government departments in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. The programme was formed in 2011 as part of the East Sussex Strategic Partnership with the aim of facilitating co-location and collaboration on property-based activity.

9.6. SPACES has successfully bid for funds from One Public Estate (OPE) phases 5 and 7, which has allocated funding to support the delivery of collaborative public sector land and property projects which lead to reduced revenue costs, increased capital receipts and an opportunity for aligned service delivery as well as potential for housing development on surplus sites.

9.7. We will be looking to engage in the next round of OPE funding and focus on surplus sites to identify any marriage value or land swap opportunities. There will also be a focus on the challenges partner organisations face in their property-based activity, such as finding appropriate resource, to identify if a joint approach could help overcome them. The SPACES Strategy is being drafted to help identify where SPACES can assist partners in achieving their property goals.

#### Property Asset Management

9.8. The County Council has a property asset disposal and investment strategy which is integral to the Capital Strategy and programme both in terms of investing in priority areas and generating capital receipts to fund other capital priorities. This strategy will be reviewed to reflect learning from experience in the coronavirus pandemic to reflect the Council's demands on assets and buildings and the standards these need to be delivered to.

#### Legal Services

9.9. As new legislation/guidance has emerged relating to the coronavirus pandemic, we have provided legal advice and support across the Council on a broad range of pandemic related issue. The team has worked closely with colleagues in Children's Services and the local courts to make arrangements for remote hearings in respect of proceedings to safeguard children most at risk and to put together an offer for use of ESCC equipment and premises for contested hearings.

#### Coroner Services

9.10. Coroner Services has been an integral component of the Local Resilience Forum in terms of planning for COVID19 and addressing the practicalities of dealing with COVID19 deaths. Although COVID19 as a cause of death does not in itself result in a referral to the Coroner, the Coroner has dealt with referrals where COVID-19 is suspected alongside another cause. Post mortems have continued to be

undertaken in a timely manner and the Coroner has successfully managed to undertake paper inquests where basic medical evidence only is required. Non-paper inquests cannot be held remotely and have currently been delayed until August 2020.

#### Communications, lobbying and engagement

9.11. Work is underway to discuss with residents the impact that COVID-19 has had on them and to understand their priorities for reset and recovery in East Sussex. The council continues to play a leading role in publicising and signposting the services and resources to support residents, especially community hubs. Dedicated web pages on coronavirus, printed leaflets, social media campaigns and email bulletins have helped keep people informed and communication is evolving to reflect the changing effects of the virus in East Sussex.

9.12. In lobbying national government, the Council is clear about the limits on its current and future resources and identifies ways it can work with partners for the most effective local delivery of services.