

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 10 November 2020  
**By:** Chief Executive  
**Title:** Coronavirus Update  
**Purpose:** To provide a further update on the measures the Council has taken in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

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## ***RECOMMENDATION***

**Cabinet is recommended to note the report.**

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### **1 Background**

1.1 Staff across the Council remain involved in a huge amount of work to support the national and local response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have continued to change and adapt services to meet the evolving situation over the summer and autumn, and to prioritise looking after the most vulnerable people and preventing Covid-19 transmission wherever possible.

1.2 Since the last update to Cabinet in early June, the Council has responded to Government's gradual loosening of national lockdown arrangements, adapting services to be Covid-secure, while capturing the lessons learnt from different ways of working. Some staff have worked from office bases or directly with clients throughout the pandemic, with appropriate safeguards in place, where this has been essential to maintain services. Where possible and appropriate, frontline services which had needed to close have reopened and/or returned to face to face working with safeguards in place. Where remote working has proved efficient and effective this is continuing in line with Government guidance in order to help contain the spread of the virus and to prioritise the use of buildings for essential purposes.

1.3 We are also undertaking our service and financial planning in the new context. Through our well-established Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process we are integrating planning for the recovery from Covid-19 with our understanding of other trends and pressures to form an integrated view of future service needs. The changes we have made and economic upheaval brought about by the pandemic will have profound and potentially permanent impacts on our services and finances which need to be factored into our planning.

1.4 We are continuing to keep a careful record of all the additional costs we have incurred as result of the decisions we have made in order to tackle the pandemic. Whilst the Government has partially recognised the additional costs to local government and has made additional funding available, it is insufficient to meet all the pressures we face, particularly in relation to adult social care and costs in future years. We will need to continue to lobby strongly for continuing funding to meet residents' needs and to support recovery.

1.5 Members have received regular briefings on the work the Council is undertaking to help tackle the Covid-19 outbreak. This report provides an update on the latest position to the week ending 30 October. Full details of the changes to our services continue to be available on our website.

1.6 On 31 October, the Prime Minister announced new national restrictions to come into effect from 5 November to limit the spread of coronavirus. These restrictions include a requirement to only leave home for specific reasons and the closure on non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues. The furlough scheme that was due to end has been extended another month in support of the business closure measures. We are working to understand the implications of the measures for the way we work and deliver services, and the potential impact on our residents, businesses and partners to consider any changes in support that will be needed.

This report covers:

<b>2. Covid-19 in East Sussex</b>	<b>11. Highways and Transport</b>
<b>3. Outbreak planning/test and trace</b>	<b>12. Parking charges</b>
<b>4. Adult Social Care</b>	<b>13. Active travel programme</b>
<b>5. Children's Services</b>	<b>14. Business Services</b>
<b>6. PPE</b>	<b>15. Member Meetings</b>
<b>7. Shielded Cohort</b>	<b>16. Communications</b>
<b>8. Trading Standards</b>	<b>17. Financial Implications</b>
<b>9. Libraries</b>	<b>18. Economy</b>
<b>10. Waste Recycling Sites</b>	<b>19. Recovery and next steps</b>

## 2. Covid-19 in East Sussex

2.1 Overall, East Sussex has experienced lower levels of total confirmed cases than the national average, and this is the case for each of the five District and Borough Councils within the county. In East Sussex cases reduced from April and early May, which was the first wave of the pandemic, with low numbers and an overall decline throughout June, July and August. As cases started rising nationally at the beginning of September, East Sussex saw a similar pattern of rising cases albeit at a smaller rate. Although cases continued rising nationally the trend then initially reversed in East Sussex, before again increasing.

2.2 The weekly rate of cases in England has shown a significant increase in September and October and is currently at 224 per 100,000. Although the East Sussex weekly rate is significantly lower than the England weekly rate (64 compared to 224), the past week has shown a large increase. Cases in the last 14 days continue to show a higher proportion amongst younger age groups than we have seen overall since the pandemic started.

Table: Confirmed cases, as of 28 October 2020

	All confirmed cases to date			7-day period 17 <sup>th</sup> Oct to 23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct		
	Cases	Rate per 100,000 population	LA rank *	Cases	Rate per 100,000 population	LA rank *
England	799,019	1,420		126,061	224	
South East	70,898	772		9,153	100	
East Sussex	3,098	556	145/149	358	64	147/149
Eastbourne	745	718	256/315	78	75	277/315
Hastings	382	412	306/315	47	51	303/315
Lewes	646	626	273/315	82	79	267/315
Rother	374	389	307/315	40	42	310/315
Wealden	951	589	279/315	111	69	281/315

\*where 1 = highest rate. Ranks are out of 149 upper tier local authorities and 315 lower tier local authorities

Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk>

2.3 Hospitalisations from Covid-19 and also deaths associated with Covid-19 remained low in the county through most of the summer. The numbers started to increase at the beginning of October and as of 28 October there were 17 patients with Covid-19 in hospital across East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust and 30 at Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust. There have been six deaths occurring since the start of September where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate.

2.4 Public Health continually monitors the situation in consultation with health and borough and district partners. This includes reviewing recent cases, identifying areas that may not be Covid-secure, and proactively supporting businesses and other settings to prevent cases and limit the spread of potential outbreaks. On a weekly basis this involves key partners understanding the latest Covid-19 infections and agreeing the local operational response.

### **3. Outbreak planning/test and trace**

3.1 Government launched a national Covid-19 Contain Framework in mid-July, which set out how NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Centre will work with local authorities, Public Health England (PHE) and the public to contain and manage local Covid-19 outbreaks. The framework provided further guidance on roles, responsibilities and powers of Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLA) in managing local outbreaks, following publication of Local Outbreak Management Plans by all UTLAs in June. Government has allocated funding to UTLAs to support development and delivery of these plans. ESCC has received £2.5m which is being used to support implementation of the East Sussex Local Outbreak Control Plan approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board in July. The move to localised management of outbreaks is part of the Government's strategy to undertake a targeted response, employ smarter restrictions and limit nation-wide restrictions as far as is possible to manage the pandemic. However, Government reinstated some nation-wide restrictions following a national increase in COVID-19 case rates since early September, before announcing a month-long national lockdown at the end of October.

3.2 The second iteration of the East Sussex Outbreak Control Plan was reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board in September. This included an escalation framework which set out the points at which local cases or outbreaks may require an escalated response, communications and action with partners. In consultation with local partners, the Director of Public Health agreed East Sussex should move from 'monitor and contain' to 'raised local alertness' on the escalation framework in September in response to the rising number of cases. The framework is now being updated again to take account of the new national alert levels which consist of three levels, or tiers: Medium (Tier 1), High (Tier 2), and Very High (Tier 3). East Sussex is currently at the lowest alert level: Medium, or Tier 1.

3.3 Test and trace continues to be led nationally. People with symptoms of coronavirus are able to access a test through the national website. East Sussex has taken up the offer to support the national NHS Test and Trace system with local contact tracing. Final plans are being agreed with the national team for this to be activated imminently.

3.4 The local contact tracing model developed for the county sees the West Sussex County Council customer services call centre managing the East Sussex and West Sussex contact tracing call operations. The telephone number seen by the person contacted will be an East Sussex local number, not a number withheld, with reply facility via text, email and

voicemail. The service will operate between 8am-8pm seven days a week. Names and contact details will be checked with all District and Borough Councils through their records, council tax, benefits system and housing. Specialist oversight will be offered by the local Public Health Team. House calls will be undertaken, in exceptional circumstances, by District and Borough Environmental Health teams where someone is uncontactable. This may become more frequent in a lockdown situation, as people are unable to top up pay-as-you-go mobile phones. Where the individual answers the door, the Environmental Health Officer will discuss the positive result, social distancing requirements, extra support needs and identify contacts to feed back for entry into the national system. Where there is no answer, a 'sorry I missed you' postcard will be left with contact details.

3.5 On 24 September 2020 the national NHS test and trace app was launched and will alert users if they have been in contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19 and advise them to self-isolate. Council staff are able to access testing through national schemes and also can contact Human Resources if there are capacity issues.

3.6 A regional testing site opened at Plumpton Racecourse on 2 October 2020 which is drive-in only. There are also local testing sites in Bexhill and Eastbourne (Eastbourne opened on 9 October 2020). A new walk-through testing centre opened on 16 October at the former Helenswood Academy upper school car park in Hastings, making more tests available for Hastings residents, particularly those who don't have access to a private vehicle. In addition, mobile testing units, which can be directed to areas of concern for two to three days a month, have been to Uckfield, Eastbourne, Lewes and Hastings recently.

3.7 Care home testing for residents and staff continues to be challenging. Care homes report frequent delays in test results coming back to homes which makes staffing arrangements difficult to plan. Some homes have had to repeat tests due to the results not being returned, which can be a cause of anxiety for residents, especially those with dementia and learning disabilities.

3.8 In an outbreak situation the PHE health protection team will lead on the testing of all staff and residents on day 1 and again for the people testing negative on days 4 to 7. Residents who test positive for Covid-19 should not be included in whole home testing until 90 days after the original positive test, unless they develop new symptoms. There is a one-off offer of whole home testing for specialist settings such as those in supported living, which will be rolled out in the next two months.

3.9 There is now a legal requirement for people to self-isolate when they test positive for Covid-19 or are instructed to by NHS Test and Trace. New fines have been brought in to enforce the requirement. People on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result of being asked to self-isolate will receive a payment of £500, administered via District and Borough Councils.

#### **4. Adult Social Care**

4.1 Earlier this year, Government established an Adult Social Care (ASC) Taskforce to oversee delivery of support to the social care sector in its response to Covid-19; and of the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) Social Care Action Plan. As part of its work, the Taskforce was commissioned to advise the Minister of State for Social Care on what needed to be in place in the care sector in England to respond to Covid-19 ahead of winter. The final report of the Taskforce, published in late September, includes 52 recommendations for Government, local authorities, the NHS and others within the health and social care system. We are working through the recommendations with our partners across the local health and social care system.

4.2 The Taskforce recommendations have informed Government's ASC Winter Plan, also published in September, setting out its ambitions for and challenges facing the social care sector this winter. The plan outlines actions DHSC is taking and actions local systems (councils, the NHS and Voluntary and Community Sector) should take to ensure that high-quality, safe and timely care is provided to everyone who needs it, whilst protecting people who need care, their carers and the social care workforce from Covid-19.

4.3 The plan outlines a wide-range of actions that local systems and DHSC are already taking to provide care while reducing transmission of Covid-19. Further actions the plan outlines DHSC is taking include:

- working up a designation scheme with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for premises that are safe for people leaving hospital who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are awaiting a test result – although it will remain councils' responsibility to provide alternative accommodation in local systems for supporting people with a positive test result requiring care;
- providing free Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (for Covid-19 needs in line with current guidance) to care homes and domiciliary care providers via the PPE portal until the end of March 2021;
- providing free PPE to local resilience forums (LRFs) who wish to continue PPE distribution, and to local authorities in other areas, to distribute to social care providers ineligible for supply via the PPE portal, until the end of March 2021;
- working with local authorities and the CQC to strengthen their monitoring and regulation role to ensure infection prevention and control procedures are taking place;
- publishing a new online Adult Social Care Dashboard, bringing together data from the Capacity Tracker and other sources;
- publishing information about effective local and regional protocols and operational procedures based on what we have learnt so far to support areas with local outbreaks and/or increased community transmission; and
- in partnership with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and Local Government Association, carrying out a Service Continuity and Care Market Review in the autumn to understand the robustness of the plans local authorities have in place, and what additional support may be needed.

4.4 The primary new and additional actions for ESCC resulting from the plan are:

- to put in a place an East Sussex Winter Plan building on existing planning, including the East Sussex Local Outbreak Plan and in the context of planning for the end of the Brexit Transition Period, by 31 October;
- provide free PPE to care providers ineligible for the PPE portal (supplied by DHSC) when required (including for personal assistants) directly until March 2021;
- to work with local partners to carry out learning reviews after each care home outbreak to identify and share lessons learned;
- to ensure care providers carry out testing as set out in the testing strategy and, together with NHS organisations, provide local support for testing in adult social care if needed;
- for the Director of Public Health to regularly assess whether visiting care homes is appropriate, taking into account the wider risk environment and immediately moving to stop visiting if an area becomes an 'area of intervention', except in exceptional circumstances such as end of life;
- to work alongside the CQC to ensure care homes are taking necessary steps to prevent spread of the virus and follow up with care providers that are not limiting staff movement; and
- establish a weekly joint communication from the Director of Adult Social Care and Health and Director of Public Health to go to all local providers of adult social care.

4.5 Government has also requested all councils complete a care market sustainability self-assessment. This will be reported to the Minister of Care, through DHSC. The Minister is seeking assurance that care markets are sustainable through the winter period and where this cannot be provided the intention is to provide support to councils to address any identified challenges.

4.6 Government has committed to continue to engage across the sector to understand needs as they develop throughout the winter and provide appropriate support. We will continue to engage and emphasise the need for a sustainable funding settlement for social care, that reflects the scale of investment made in the NHS, and the need to limit self-assessment/assurance/Government reporting to free-up fundamental capacity to deliver.

4.7 Government has provided a second £546m tranche of Infection Control Funding, to be distributed by councils to care providers, to support delivery of their plans. This is a new grant, with revised conditions from the original Infection Control Fund and additional reporting requirements. East Sussex's total allocation of this funding is £8.3m, 80% of which must be paid across to care homes and community providers in the East Sussex geographical area, including providers with whom the local authority does not have existing contracts. The funding will help providers with the extra costs of infection prevention and control measures, including payment of care workers who are self-isolating, restricting workforce movement and avoidance of the use of public transport. The remaining 20% can be spent on supporting care providers to take additional steps to tackle the risk of Covid-19 infections but can be allocated at the local authority's discretion. £588m has also been provided for the NHS to support people needing additional follow-on care after they have been discharged from hospital. From 1 September 2020 to 31 March 2021, the NHS will fund up to the first six weeks of support following hospital discharge, during which assessments will be carried out to determine ongoing care and funding arrangements.

4.8 Many community based local care providers continue to operate with reduced capacity and many continue to deliver support in different ways due to social distancing requirements. For example, due to social distancing requirements, day service providers are not able to run at full capacity. Alternative support provided to day service clients has included regular telephone calls, zoom sessions, sending out resource packs, visiting clients in their gardens or supporting them on socially distanced walks. Some providers have now started to support clients with tasks in their home and to provide carer respite where this has been appropriate, until such time as they can support them in the day service again.

4.9 Adult Social Care and the East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust continue to work in close partnership to support the timely discharge of patients from hospital into care homes. Maintaining staffing levels whilst staff are self-isolating; supporting residents to self-isolate (especially residents with dementia); adhering to testing and infection, prevention and control requirements and facilitating safe visiting arrangements for families and carers, all continue to be challenges for care homes.

4.10 Adult Social Care and Health continue to support providers through the provision of up to date information and guidance through the regular e-bulletin which is circulated to around 1200 recipients. In partnership with the East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Adult Social Care and Public Health run weekly care home meetings, with provider representatives. These online meetings provide care homes with the opportunity to discuss current issues with health and social care partners, including GP and clinical leads. In addition, the weekly Incident Management Team meetings agree the health and social care system support and response required for care homes where Covid-19 outbreaks have occurred, or where other more general infection, prevention and control support is needed.

4.11 The East Sussex Care Homes Resilience Plan, published in May 2020, has been reviewed and refreshed. It is being delivered by the East Sussex Care Homes Group which has representation from all key stakeholders including the East Sussex Registered Care Association and Healthwatch.

## 5. Children's Services

### Schools

5.1 Pupils returned to schools and colleges at the start of September with education settings putting a 'system of controls' in place to keep students and staff safe, focused around minimising direct contact and maintaining social distancing wherever possible. The Council has been working with schools to implement the Government guidance.

5.2 Since reopening, attendance figures for individual schools and settings have fluctuated week by week as parents and carers respond to the national public health picture. The average daily attendance as a percentage of registered pupils was as follows during September and the first half of October:

w/c Monday 7 September	65.2%
w/c Monday 14 September	76.8%
w/c Monday 21 September	80.2%
w/c Monday 28 September	79.8%
w/c Monday 5 October	87.7%
w/c Monday 12 October	89.5%

In the first two weeks of term, schools phased the students return and attendance figures were also skewed by several INSET days across all schools and settings.

5.3 Although looking at attendance data can give some information about how schools are coping in the current climate; the data can change so quickly that it is not as reliable as a school performance measure as in previous years. The data above comes from the Department for Education (DfE) but it is important to note that it is not verifiable as there are several schools who do not complete their returns on a daily basis. This data also does not consider the students who are marked as being in attendance, but who are self-isolating and accessing learning from home. ISEND will produce a much clearer, verified set of attendance data by early November. Throughout the academic year, reports on attendance will be produced monthly and will show the data for the preceding month.

5.4 Education settings re-opened in places elsewhere in the country which were subject to local restrictions and Government has been clear that re-introduction of restrictions on education and childcare settings is to be considered only once all other possible measures have been taken. A tiered system of restrictions has been established to guide the phased introduction that would take place in circumstances where areas that are subject to national intervention require some level of restriction to education or childcare settings. Tier 1 restrictions apply to all areas subject to local intervention; all schools remain open but with a requirement for adults and pupils in settings educating years 7 and over to wear face coverings in communal areas where it is not possible to socially distance. Guidance has been provided to support settings to plan for how they would implement tier 2 restrictions - moving to a rota model, combining on-site provision with remote education - if required. Tiers 3 and 4 involve further limiting students attending on site in different education settings.

5.5 There has been an increased expectation on councils to support schools this year: with partial closure; with providing places for vulnerable children and children of keyworkers in lockdown; with provision of remote learning in lockdown; and recently with making

preparations to re-open. In this new context, the focus of the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) for the 2020/21 academic year will be on:

- Planning, preparation and support for schools in potential local lockdowns – see 5.4 above;
- Increased support for vulnerable pupils, including safeguarding, addressing learning loss and ensuring attendance;
- Ongoing co-ordination of services for schools;
- Managing the impact of Covid-19 on early years providers and ensuring that we maintain sufficient places for the future; and
- Supporting young people into Education, Employment and Training during a period of rising unemployment and economic downturn that will disproportionately impact 18-24 year olds.

5.6 The Council provided advice and support to schools throughout the lockdown period and the summer holidays and this has continued as schools return for the new academic year. There have been some school and bubble closures across the county, but schools have felt confident in the steps to take as a result of good communication from the Council and the availability of members of the SLES team to talk directly to headteachers.

5.7 The twice weekly Message Board has been updated regularly with the latest guidance regarding necessary actions to take when schools are informed of a confirmed or suspected case of Covid-19. Schools have also been provided, through the Message Board, with regularly updated model risk assessments and contingency plans which they have used to inform their own plans for reopening safely. The Council is keeping a record of which schools have had their risk assessments reviewed and approved by the governing body and is analysing any potential risk as a result. In schools where there are positive cases of Covid-19, the protocols are being followed and the Council has been informed of bubble or school closures. The Council is also working with Public Health England to identify and track cases in schools across East Sussex.

5.8 Schools have contingency plans in place in the event of future local or national lockdowns, including plans for remote learning. Via the Message Board, headteachers receive DfE updates about remote learning expectations and support. Alongside this, the Council has provided research on the principles of remote learning and examples of practice from schools. This guidance document presents solutions for schools to consider when faced with pupil disengagement with remote learning, remote provision for pupils with SEND and pupils being unable to access technology. It also suggests ways to educate pupils when only a small number need to isolate and learn remotely. The term one primary and special school adviser visits include discussions about the schools' contingency plans, risk assessments and remote learning plans.

5.9 Schools across East Sussex are keen to continue with the schools' partnership peer review system and, considering the new challenges that schools are facing this year, the usual model has been adapted and transformed into a rapid response model. Schools will continue their peer reviews but will shift focus to reviewing and supporting each other with issues arising from Covid-19. In partnership, schools will work together to look at: how the school is organised; how assessment is being used to ensure all needs are being met and gaps addressed; how mental health and wellbeing is being supported; how pupils are engaging with learning; and how to adopt, adapt or abandon practice from the lockdown period.

5.10 The number of new Electively Home Educated (EHE) children has increased by 67% compared to this time last year (term one 2019/20 146 new cases, at the end of term one 2020/21 there were 244 new cases). This reflects reporting nationally about a likely increase in EHE requests following the Coronavirus lockdown. There are currently 1192 children (as

at 20 October 2020) being EHE in East Sussex. In recognition of the growth over time, which is not slowing, and the safeguarding risks associated with delayed screening of and visits to vulnerable EHE children, additional resources have been agreed to increase capacity in our dedicated EHE team.

### Home to School Transport

5.11 In the summer, national guidance was published on transport provision to support the return of schools and colleges in September. This set out that, as capacity on public transport is limited, local authorities needed to put in place local demand management solutions for public services, and supplement the public bus network, and existing home to school transport, with additional capacity to ensure that children could travel to school safely, and disruption for all passengers on the public network was minimised. The Transport Team made arrangements to support school returns accordingly, including working with operators to ensure sufficient provision on the network of bus services used by school children travelling to schools in East Sussex and to other neighbouring authorities.

5.12 The County Council has been allocated £0.8m by the DfE to assist in securing additional transport capacity until the end of the December school term. We are expecting future resource for January to March but this has not yet been confirmed.

### Early Years Sector (EYS) Providers

5.13 Providers across the whole sector are working hard to sustain their businesses. The Council recognised this and has supported them since the country went into lockdown in March. The impact on demand for all providers has been dynamic. In the period March to August 2020 the focus was on childcare provision for key workers' children and those identified vulnerable children. In April East Sussex had only 40% of its early years provision open, reflecting the national trend. As the lockdown period began, and the economic impact began to be felt, it became apparent that the demand on all the early years funding entitlements, including for the least advantaged two-year olds, universal three and four year olds, and the 30 hours entitlement would change moving forward. Future demand for paid-for childcare, and/or the ability for families to access additional services and pay additional charges remain unknown.

5.14 Since June, as the country came out of lockdown, early years providers that had closed due to Covid-19 began to re-open. The number of providers open steadily increased to over 90% by September. A range of action has been undertaken by Children's Services since March to support both early years providers to remain sustainable, and families to ensure that vulnerable and key worker children had access to a childcare place if needed. This included: confirming that ESCC would continue to pay Early Years Education Entitlement (EYEE) grant to all providers that remained open or closed due to Covid-19 in the summer 2020 funding period; providing a brokering service to support families of vulnerable/keyworker children who need childcare provision; ensuring identified vulnerable children are supported in their childcare place; and providing regular and targeted communication, advice and information to early years providers. From September 2020, the Council will provide financial support to early years providers where the expected level of funding for two, three and four year olds is lower than expected and lower than their autumn 2019 return. This support also includes the deficit between 2020 and 2019 non-funded hours accessed by children claiming the early years entitlement.

### Digital Devices for Disadvantaged Children to access Remote Education

5.15 During the lockdown, the Council supported the allocation of 1,187 laptops and tablets to the most vulnerable Year 10 pupils, under a DfE scheme aimed at ensuring pupils

could continue learning at home. East Sussex was the first local authority to order laptops and committed additional resources to address the gap between DfE allocations and targeted pupils in year 10 requiring equipment to access online learning. Working in partnership with Uni Connect and Hastings Opportunity Area, further resource enabled us to order in excess of 200 additional devices to support our most vulnerable learners.

5.16 On 1 October the DfE announced extra resources to support delivery of remote education, including 100,000 additional devices and increased peer to peer support for teachers. The new support includes additional laptops to be made available for those children most in need, as well as expanding the EdTech Demonstrator programme to ensure schools and teachers can make best use of technology available to them to enhance the at-home learning given to their pupils. Individual school across East Sussex will order devices themselves based on their needs, supported by Schools ICT.

### Vulnerable Groups

5.17 From 30 March to the end of July the Council set up a Vulnerable Children Risk Assessment Group (VCRAG) to monitor vulnerable pupils and support their access to learning and safety. For a final, high risk, cohort of pupils who did not return to school in September the process also ran from 7 September to 9 October. Information was collated in relation to vulnerable groups and was linked to a core attendance recovery offer from Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) for every primary, secondary and special school who submitted a return. As at 16 October 2020:

- 208 pupils have not yet returned;
- of those, 94 are in at least one vulnerable category (45%); and
- over the five week period, non-returners have decreased from 856 to 208.

5.18 In the event of a local lockdown, or multiple local lockdowns at “Tiers of Restriction” 1 or 2 a centralised VCRAG process will not be required. Secondary schools and FE colleges will be required to remotely safeguard students who are not in school for the rota periods and where there are significant concerns these should be referred to the Single Point of Advice (SPOA) following regular procedures. In the event of a Tier 3 or 4 lockdown within any district in East Sussex, VCRAG processes will be initiated.

5.19 Should there be a local or national lockdown that results in partial school closures, the Council’s focus in relation to children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will be on ensuring school attendance; that is the best way of securing high quality EHCP provision and ensuring children with EHCPs do not fall further behind following an extended period of disruption. The Council will follow the Government guidance that is issued at the time, which may have different recommendations and expectations.

### Children’s Social Care

5.20 A suite of performance indicators is reviewed weekly to keep an overview of what is happening in terms of contacts with children’s services teams.

#### *Front Door contacts*

5.21 We saw an initial reduction in activity in the front door teams during lockdown. To ensure that children remained safe, the social work teams risk assessed all the vulnerable children on their caseloads and also worked with colleagues in schools and the SLES to maintain oversight of a larger group of children. Referrals from the Police to the social work teams were also at higher levels during the lockdown and referrals from schools were at much lower levels. With the return of schools in September, the number of contacts to the Single Point of Advice (SPOA) is now approaching pre-lockdown levels. From 6 January to 22 March the average was 246 per week. The average since the start of the Autumn term,

as at 12 October, is 253. The number of contacts from schools is also approaching pre-lockdown levels. From 6 January to 22 March the average was 55 per week. In the four weeks up to 12 October the average number of contacts from schools was 46. Although referrals into the social work teams have remained broadly stable overall, proportions are being rebalanced as Police referrals decrease and referrals from schools increase once more.

#### *Children on Child Protection (CP) Plans*

5.22 The number of children on a CP Plan continued to rise over the summer with an increase of 17% overall. The number of children on CP plans increased from 544 in the week commencing 16 March to 637 at the end of September. This was in part due to CP plans not ceasing as it was difficult to end plans safely if children were not being seen regularly at school and some contact by social work staff was happening virtually. Targeted work is now underway to focus on a safe reduction in the number of plans now that more face to face visiting is taking place and more children are in school. As a result of this work the number of CP Plans as at 11 October had reduced to 599.

#### Residential Units

5.23 The five children's homes and Lansdowne Secure Unit have remained open throughout, although residential respite support for disabled children had to be severely curtailed and the number of visitors to all the buildings strictly limited. The Lansdowne Secure Unit experienced a Covid outbreak at the start of lockdown with a number of staff and some children testing positive. This was managed via strict infection control measures and all of the homes have used personal protective equipment and additional hygiene measures to keep children and staff safe.

### **6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

6.1 Emergency PPE provision via the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) ceased on 18 September. The County Council has issued over 1.1 million items of SRF sourced stock to the local health and care system since April 2020. CQC registered providers are now able to access PPE through the Government's PPE portal. Take-up of the Portal and availability of PPE within the sector continue to be monitored.

6.2 The SRF holds emergency contingency stock for the whole of Sussex. Access to this stock and associated governance has been agreed with all partners. Additionally, the County Council has a limited amount of emergency SRF stock that is being held in case of issues with the Portal service.

6.3 The County Council also now holds considerable PPE stock available to council services. Over 1 million items of our own stock have been issued to date. Joint procurement has been undertaken with partners and, where appropriate, County Council PPE can be procured by statutory partners. The availability of PPE has improved considerably since March and confidence exists that County Council procurement can meet future demand based on existing modelling.

### **7. Shielded Cohort**

7.1 Supplementary to the Contain Framework, a Covid-19 Shielding Framework has been published to inform local authority planning to support Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals in the event that shielding guidance is reintroduced on a local or national basis. Any decision to reintroduce shielding will be taken at a national level, and the framework sets out that in the event this happens councils will now be responsible for assessing the food and basic support needs of CEV individuals and facilitating delivery of

that support. Funding to support councils in assessing and meeting these needs is anticipated but details are to be confirmed.

7.2 Planning is underway for a potential shielding operation based on the guidance issued and discussion with Government. Food box provision will now be the responsibility of local authorities and be intended to be a last resort, with far more emphasis placed upon supermarket and local retailer delivery options and a local volunteer and community response than in the first lockdown.

7.3 Additional temporary capacity is being recruited to Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC), along with commissioning external contact centre capacity should the need arise. A contract for food box provision has already been procured. During the lockdown from March to August a significant number of County Council staff were redeployed to the call centre and food box delivery. It is anticipated that any future lockdown will not result in the cessation of such a wide range of Council services as previously and, as such, a different delivery model will be required, based far more on commissioning external expertise and capacity, rather than utilising redeployed staff.

7.4 The County Council has signed up for the necessary data flows from the NHS, and a data management process has been developed and has been tested. Data will be provided to the County Council, along with each of the Districts and Boroughs, which was not the case previously.

7.5 The Community Hubs in each District and Borough are still live and most have been absorbed into existing contact centre arrangements. Current call volumes are low, at around 20 per week across East Sussex. Contingency plans for re-escalating the Community Hubs in the event of increased lockdown measures are in development.

7.6 Working groups exist with voluntary and community sector and health partners and District and Borough Councils looking at the county's preparedness with regard to shielding and the Community Hubs. Engagement remains strong and collaboration good. Concern as to a wider range of vulnerabilities experienced by residents relating to the wider impact of Covid-19 are relevant to the capacity of the Community Hubs.

## **8. Trading Standards**

8.1 Both District and Borough Councils (via Environmental Health) and ESCC (via Trading Standards) have been designated by the Secretary of State to enforce emergency regulations regarding business premises closures and other restrictions within their areas. Trading Standards and Environmental Health across East and West Sussex have put in place protocols based upon premises type to avoid any unnecessary duplication of effort, together with having close liaison with Sussex Police who have an enforcement role with individuals. A single point of contact within each service has been established to ensure that wherever complaints are received they are quickly routed to the correct service without needing to re-signpost the person making the complaint. Most recently, this has seen complaints and enquiries relating to social distancing, taking and retaining contact information (for the NHS Test and Trace system), hospitality closure, large event management and wearing of face coverings. Legislation has also been introduced giving the County Council powers to issue Directions to stop events, close public areas and close specific premises if there is deemed a serious public health risk. This is a decision for the Director of Public Health (DPH) based on information and intelligence received. Trading Standards is assisting with this process.

8.2 Since March 2020, Trading Standards has received over 550 enquiries relating to Covid-19 and has dealt with each in line with the protocols outlined above. Most recently,

the service has attended a large scale event to monitor and assist with Covid-19 controls and undertaken over 110 visits to close contact businesses such as hairdressers and barbers to check compliance with the latest Covid-19 requirements on contact tracing.

8.3 Trading Standards has continued its existing investigations and animal health intervention work throughout lockdown, using remote contacts and interviewing as far as is possible. Despite some difficulties with the court system, there have been two successful prosecutions in relation to both an animal welfare matter and an illegal tobacco seizure. More recently, the service has restarted their food sampling and inspection work and has been actively engaged with Government, Port Health Authority and Newhaven Port concerning preparations for the end of the EU Exit transition period in December 2020. The service has inevitably needed to reprioritise work to ensure sufficient capacity for both business as usual and Covid-19 related work but has used the well tested weekly tasking process to allocate resources accordingly.

## **9. Libraries**

9.1 Five libraries reopened in July and feedback from customers has been positive. The remaining 12 libraries reopened from 19 October. We have continued to offer browsing of stock and computer sessions and have restored the Reservation Service for customers to reserve specific items from any library, alongside our new Select and Collect Service. We have resumed one to one computer support by volunteers and continue to support people to access digital services online and by phone. Use of online services remains very high; borrowing of eBooks has doubled since April. Family Learning and other adult learning courses are being delivered successfully online. We have launched new digital services including support for people participating in online job interviews.

## **10. Household Waste Recycling Sites**

10.1 All of the Council's waste disposal facilities for the disposal of black bag waste, dry recycling and garden waste have continued throughout the lockdown and the summer period.

10.2 All of our Household Waste Recycling Sites are open and operating, albeit a few restrictions remain in place. The number of unloading bays at each site is still restricted to ensure safe distancing and trailers are still not permitted because of the time taken to manoeuvre and unload the larger volumes of waste. Vans and oversized vehicles are permitted entry on two days a week, and chargeable waste is now accepted. The sites are operating well and safely, and residents are appreciative of the staff operating the sites. The queues that were experienced when the sites reopened during lockdown have reduced and only occur at one or two sites during peak times. All of our sites switched to their winter opening times from 1 October.

## **11. Highways and Transport**

11.1 Work has continued on highway maintenance and the Highways Service has continued to provide a near normal service, whilst maintaining safe distancing and ensuring the safety of the workforce and public. The roads patching programme has progressed as normal and two patching units have continued to work in the county throughout the summer, taking advantage of the quieter roads during lockdown. The surface dressing and resurfacing programmes have progressed to plan.

11.2 Maintenance of the county's public rights of way, bridges and structures has continued throughout lockdown and the summer period to plan.

## **12. Parking Charges**

12.1 The new on-street pay and display parking tariffs and permit charges came into force on 1 July, and at the same time enforcement on-street resumed following the lockdown.

12.2 The County Council received Department for Transport and parliamentary approval of its Civil Parking Enforcement powers and civil parking enforcement commenced across Rother district on 29 September.

## **13. Active travel programme**

13.1 Following the Secretary of State for Transport's announcement on 9 May that funding would be allocated to local authorities to implement temporary transport measures, a programme of potential schemes that could be implemented in the county was developed to encourage more walking and cycling, support safe social distancing and help restart the local economy as the Covid-19 restrictions are eased. In doing so, we engaged with our Borough and District Council colleagues as well as walking and cycling groups across the county for their thoughts and suggestions. The extent of the programme was always predicated on the amount of funding that indicatively would be made available to the County Council and assessing the impacts that any such measures would have on enabling safe social distancing and access to shops and businesses in our high streets, jobs, medical facilities and schools.

13.2 The Government instructed that the Emergency Active Travel Fund measures must be in place quickly, with the expectation that we would only consult with statutory stakeholders, such as emergency services. Despite this, and particularly in light of the potential economic impacts of some of the proposals on our high streets in particular, we felt it was important to get the views of those living and working in the area rather than impose a scheme upon them. Therefore, we undertook a variety of local consultations with local businesses and residents as well as stakeholders during the summer. Ultimately, this resulted in the decision to proceed with schemes in Bexhill and Hastings.

13.3 We have also submitted a bid to Government for Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Programme which, if successful, will focus more on improving existing footways and cycleways in the county. We are awaiting announcement of the outcome of the bid. It is still expected that any measures will need to be implemented by the end of March 2021.

## **14. Business Services**

14.1 Orbis continues to support staff to effectively deliver all services that we can remotely to reduce the risk of coronavirus spread. Across the Council we have seen improvements in productivity due to modernised processes and increased flexibility of working. Staff management and new service delivery practices are enabling staff to work in this increasingly flexible way. Opportunities to embed and expand digital technologies and processes that have enhanced service delivery and working processes in lockdown are being explored. There is some indication that the shift to increased remote working and economic uncertainty has increased applications to County Council job vacancies, including previously hard-to-recruit roles.

14.2 In response to recent Government guidance around staff continuing to work from home where possible we are enhancing our wellbeing support for staff and guidance for managers and developing more targeted virtual training and interactive support sessions for our staff and managers to operate in the extended working from home environment.

14.3 Through the SPACES partnership we are sharing approaches across the public sector partners on the management of workplaces and seeking opportunities for collaborative working.

14.4 In response to the increased level of remote and digital working we have increased our focus and monitoring on cyber security and maintain strong and active engagement with the National Cyber Security Centre and our local warning advice and reporting group.

## 15. Member Meetings

15.1 Member meetings have continued to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams with arrangements continuing to be informed by feedback from the Member Reference Group. Training and guidance were provided to Members to support the transition from Skype to Teams in June, with additional communications to assist Members in making the most of the latest Teams features. A training session was provided in September specifically focused on chairing virtual meetings and additional guidance is provided to individual Chairs tailored to specific meeting arrangements. The public continues to be able to view meetings via our existing webcasting site.

15.2 Scrutiny Committees undertook a review and reset of their work programmes in June/July and restarted formal meetings in September. Scrutiny Review and Reference Group work has continued where this can be supported by departments and/or be progressed by scrutiny independently. A full programme of scrutiny and other meetings will continue under the virtual arrangements whilst advice remains to avoid physical gatherings.

## 16. Communicating with partners and residents

16.1 We have built dedicated pages on our website and kept them updated to help businesses, residents and partners get the latest information on the position in East Sussex. These pages have been viewed more than 187,000 times. We have made extensive use of social media, video and traditional media to keep people informed. This has included joint public videos with hospital doctors, nurses and GPs, and advertising targeted to parts of the county with rising infection rates. We have introduced email bulletins for residents, members, MPs, partners and staff. We have conducted two surveys with residents (to get the views of more than 11,000 people) and are planning another. We work closely with District and Borough Councils to get information to residents, especially about community hubs. Special efforts have been made to reach people from potentially marginalised groups, including people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background and those with severe existing health conditions.

## 17. Financial Implications of Covid-19

17.1 The quarter 1 monitoring report presented to Cabinet in October reflected the impact of Covid-19 pressures on services and the Council overall. Given current circumstances, finance reporting has been split into Planned Budgets/Business as Usual (non-Covid) and Covid related items. The **non-Covid related** total forecast an overspend of £1.1m on service budgets, details of which can be found in the quarter 1 monitoring report. The details of **Covid related** pressures in each department are also set out and estimate a total forecast overspend of £36.5m revenue and £1.8m capital. This was against known Covid funding of £29.7m received in Tranches 1 to 3 and set out in the table below.

Tranche 1	£16.3m
Tranche 2	£9.8m

Tranche 3	£3.6m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£29.7m</b>

17.2 The Council has submitted a bid to MHCLG for support for losses on sales, fees and charges. The bid covers the first four months of 2020/21 and totals £1.6m. The bid is subject to review, but when approved this could be extrapolated for the rest of the financial year to £4m.

17.3 Beyond broader Covid-19 grant funding, we have received more specific support, and this has been fully allocated to service departments in line with the terms and conditions of the grant funding. These include:

Infection Control Grant Tranche 1	£10.7m
Infection Control Grant Tranche 2	£8.3m
Test & Trace Grant	£2.5m
Additional Dedicated Home to School and College Transport Funding	£0.8m
Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies	£0.6m
Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 1	£0.5m

17.4 On 12 October the Government announced a further £1bn (Tranche 4) allocation to local government. Although welcomed, the Council's Tranche 4 allocation, at £3.1m, was lower than anticipated as a consequence of the rebasing of the total COVID-19 funding (Tranches 1-4) to reflect the COVID relative needs formula, which in effect removed the specific focuses of prior tranche allocations. We will now have to work to contain spend within a smaller envelope of funding, which will be a challenge. **The total allocation of COVID-19 funding is now £32.8m.**

17.5 On 16 October the Government announced that Local Authorities will be eligible for a series of payments from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to support proactive containment and intervention measures. Authorities will receive £8 per head if they are in tier 3, £3 if they are in tier 2, and £1 for tier 1. As East Sussex is at Tier 1 the Council will receive £1 per head.

17.6 Services continue to work to further understand Covid-19 pressures in their areas. Work is also ongoing with our Districts and Boroughs to understand the impact of the loss of income they are experiencing with regard to Council Tax and Business Rates. As a precepting authority, ESCC will not bear the burden of this loss until it materialises through the Collection Fund. LG Futures has been commissioned by East Sussex authorities to provide a co-ordinated understanding of the impacts of Covid-19 and the economic downturn and refine current estimates.

17.7 The updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2021/22 to 2023/24 presented to Cabinet in October is summarised in the table below. It assumes, for financial planning purposes, business as usual service provision from 1 April 2021; any ongoing Covid-19 cost pressures or income losses will be managed through the normal quarterly monitoring process. A number of funding scenarios were also presented. To what extent they will help reduce this gap will be unknown before the Local Government Provisional Settlement and/or the Spending Review; on 21 October the Spending Review was confirmed as one year with an announcement planned for the 25 November.

<b>Medium Term Financial Plan</b>	<b>2021/22 £m</b>	<b>2022/23 £m</b>	<b>2023/24 £m</b>	<b>Total £m</b>
<b>Council 11 February 2020 DEFICIT/(SURPLUS)</b>	<b>1.443</b>	<b>7.879</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>9.322</b>
Normal Updates	(2.106)	(1.441)	8.872	5.325
Proposed Updates	9.895	(0.206)	(0.477)	9.213
Savings Reprofile	2.316	(1.074)	(1.242)	0.000
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) AFTER UPDATES TO THE MTFP</b>	<b>11.548</b>	<b>5.158</b>	<b>7.154</b>	<b>23.860</b>

17.8 As set out above, the projected deficit for 2021/22 is £11.5m with an aggregate deficit of £23.9m.

## **18. Economy**

18.1 In April 2020 ESCC agreed to co-ordinate the development of an Economy Recovery Plan with partners to provide a clear focus for the economy recovery effort once the Government support schemes came to an end. The proposal was presented to Team East Sussex (TES), the county's de-facto growth board, who were unanimous in their support for the plan. It is important to note that this is not a plan for the County Council, it is a plan for TES and partners to take forward. The plan intends to be complementary and supportive of other activities being progressed at a local level, including climate change and health and wellbeing initiatives.

18.2 East Sussex Reset is an evolutionary document and is relatively short term. It has identified and will deliver interventions over the next 12-18 months that draw upon the various partners' own recovery plans and pull everything into one place so that partners, businesses, residents and visitors can see the collective contributions being made towards resetting the economy of East Sussex.

18.3 The development of the plan has involved consultation with key partners across the county, and it was endorsed by TES on 30 July, with the official launch of the plan on 9 September. The plan will be presented to Cabinet at its 8 December meeting.

## **19. Recovery and next steps**

19.1 The ongoing impact of Covid-19 and recovery from it will not be linear or even across our services and communities. We are currently seeing a national increase in infections and are likely to see waves of infection in the future. The announcement of another national lockdown could have a significant impact on our residents, businesses and partners and we may need to make further adjustments to the way we work to comply with restrictions and deliver new support. We will need to continue responding flexibly, escalating and de-escalating our provision as needed in response to increased or decreased levels of emergency measures to control the virus.

19.2 The emergency has necessitated new ways of working and has given rise to new partnerships and possibilities. These may offer opportunities to create a positive legacy for the future as we continue to develop our recovery plans alongside the response.

19.3 We need to use our existing political and business planning processes to further develop our plans. Cabinet has already reviewed the Council's priority and delivery outcomes and Core Offer in light of the new context and agreed changes to form the basis

of planning for 2021/22 and beyond. Our financial planning has been updated to reflect what we know and can estimate about the impact of Covid, although there remains much uncertainty.

19.4 This work will lead to a revised Council Plan and targets and MTFP for 2021/22 and beyond. Our integrated monitoring and risk processes provide a vehicle to allow us to continue to take a flexible approach to planning and delivery as we move through the pandemic and take account of broader changes in the context in which we are working: the impact of the pandemic on the national economy and our funding prospects; the changed needs of our residents and businesses and the impact of exiting the EU in 2021 on both the economy and our services.

**BECKY SHAW**  
**Chief Executive**