

OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

Thursday, 19th November, 2020

Present:-

Councillor Catt (Chair)

<p>Councillors Blakemore Borrell Caulfield L Collins Dyke Flood Fordham Hollingworth</p>	<p>Councillors Kellman Snowdon Kelly Coy Brittain T Gilby</p>
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Councillor Sharon Blank, Cabinet Member for Governance +++++
 Helen Fox, Acting Chief Finance Officer ++
 Councillor Tricia Gilby, Leader +
 Councillor Jean Innes, Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers +
 Charlotte Kearsey, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
 Ade McCormick, Executive Director +++++
 Donna Reddish, Service Director – Commercial +++
 Councillor Amanda Serjeant, Deputy Leader +++++
 Richard Staniforth, Deputy Chief Accountant ++

+ Attended for Minute No.8
 ++ Attended for Minute No.9
 +++ Attended for Minute No.10
 ++++ Attended for Minute No.11
 +++++ Attended for Minute No.9 and 10

1 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3 FORWARD PLAN

The Forum considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

4 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Forum considered the Scrutiny recommendations implementation monitoring schedule.

RESOLVED –

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

5 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

The Work Programme for the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum was considered.

RESOLVED –

That the Work Programme be approved.

6 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

There was no update.

7 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum held on 17 September, 2020 were presented.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 **LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMERS - ARVATO AND KIER TRANSITION: LESSONS LEARNT**

RESOLVED –

That consideration of this item be deferred and that the Committee be reconvened in December, 2020 to enable its consideration.

9 **DEPUTY LEADER - BUDGET UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader, Acting Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Accountant attended to present a report updating the Committee about Chesterfield Borough Council's (CBC) budget.

The Council approved the original General Fund budget for 2020/21 on 26 February 2020. The original budget for 2020/21 forecasted a surplus of £16k and the indications were that the medium-term outlook would continue to be challenging. The Medium-Term financial forecast approved by full Council on 26 February 2020 showed increasing deficits of £723k in 2021/22 rising to £827k by 2023/24.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the council's response to it in the first quarter of this financial year led to a revised deficit forecast of £3.246m being reported to members as part of the 'Month 2 Budget Monitoring 2020/21 & Updated Medium Term Financial Forecast' report in July. This deficit was mainly due to lost income arising from the closure of sports centres, car parks, and venues during the first national lockdown.

The Council started quarter 2 with a forecast deficit of £3.246m for the financial year 2020/21. At the end of the second quarter the position had improved to an anticipated deficit of £192k at year end. A summary of the key variances was provided in the table at paragraph 2.1 of the officer's report. One of the key variances was a third tranche of the Covid-19 grant was received from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in the sum of £205k. On the 21 October a fourth tranche of £587k was announced by MHCLG. These grants brought the

total received by the Council, across all four tranches of funding, to £1,889k.

The council had continued to submit Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant claims to HMRC. The estimate at month two was that the council might receive £500k in grant funding through this scheme. It was now anticipated that the council would receive £697k, an increase of £197k.

The council would also be eligible for Job Retention Scheme Bonus payments of £147k on the basis that no furloughed staff had been made redundant.

The Government had also provided new burdens grant funding of £160k for administering business rates reliefs and payments of Small Business Grants and Discretionary Grants to local businesses.

MHCLG launched an income compensation scheme which partially reimbursed local authorities for lost income from sales, fees and charges in 2020/21 as a result of the pandemic. CBC had recently submitted the first claim to MHCLG for the period April to July for £998k. It was estimated that this would provide around £2m of income to the council by the end of the year. MHCLG had indicated that the claims would be subject to assurance testing before payment were made.

However, the MHCLG income compensation scheme excluded reimbursement for lost rental income and demand for industrial, commercial and retail units had fallen due to the Covid-19 pandemic which had resulted in an additional cost pressures of £68k because the council was liable to pay business rates on void units.

Sheffield International Venues had recently advised the council that the current lease arrangements for Tapton Park Golf Course were no longer viable and requested financial assistance to allow the continued operation of the facility. The impact of agreeing a rent holiday for 2020/21 had been included in the quarter 2 financial position.

All of the council's budget holders had been tasked with carrying out fundamental reviews of the cost centres for which they were responsible. This work aimed to identify and agree further savings as part of the in-year annual budget review and resetting process. This work would be followed by a 'check and challenge' process involving Service Directors and the accountancy team with a curb on all non-essential spend. It was

hoped that these activities would bring the General Fund Revenue Account for 2020/21 back into balance. A review of current reserves and provisions was also underway to identify any earmarked monies that could be repurposed.

The medium-term financial plan demonstrated a more challenging outlook from 2021/22 onwards with annual forecast deficits of at least £700k. In response to this position, Council approved an action plan to eliminate the forecast deficits over the life of the medium-term financial plan. These were to be developed by officers and approved by members during 2020/21 so that savings could be realised for the start of 2021/22. It was hoped that this would place the medium-term financial plan on a path to a balanced position through 2024/25.

The impact of Covid-19 has meant that officer time in the first six months of the financial year has understandably been diverted to managing the council's response to the pandemic and to supporting residents, businesses and communities through the response and recovery stages. Immediate steps were now being taken to determine how much of the action plan could be delivered before the end of the financial year to avoid the need for more difficult decisions to be made as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

Due to the accounting arrangements for council tax and business rates income the consequences of any reduction in collection rates in the current financial year would not be felt until the following financial year. The Government had indicated that any deficits on the collection fund could be spread over three financial years rather than the normal one-year period. An analysis of the impact of this on future years' budgets would be included in the final budget reports to Cabinet and Council in February 2021.

The most significant risks and pressures to the Medium-Term financial forecast based on the best available information were outlined in the officer's report:

- Delivering budget savings at the required level and at the right time continued to be a challenge and it would become more difficult to achieve as easier options were exhausted. Future budget savings proposals were now focused on several larger savings programmes rather than those delivering smaller savings.

- Fees and charges income may be impacted by further closures imposed by local lockdowns in response to Covid-19 and the state of the economy due to continuing uncertainty around Covid-19 and Brexit. This may have a significant impact on the substantial annual income that the council generates.
- Property rents from industrial, commercial and retail units had also been affected by the state of the economy. Current occupancy levels remained high and the Council continued to invest in its rental properties, however, income from the council's interests in the Pavements and Vicar Lane Shopping Centres were continuing to decline.
- A programme of capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets had been a significant source of funding for the capital programme. The pipeline of assets sales was reducing which would mean that future capital projects would need to be funded from borrowing.
- The Council tax referendum limit for 2021/22 may be capped at 1.99%.

Members asked whether the viability issues at Tapton Park Golf Course were due to the pandemic or a different issue. The Acting Chief Finance Officer advised that the Chief Executive of the golf course had approached CBC with their viability concerns and CBC had requested to see copies of their accounts to understand the problems and how CBC could help. The rent assumption for the golf course had been reduced in the budget as a prudent approach.

Members noted that the two largest losses were from the sports centres and car parks and enquired how much of the losses would be reimbursed by MHCLG compensation and grants. The Acting Chief Finance Officer advised that approximately 60% of the income had been compensated and some money had been received from the furlough scheme. Another area of significant losses was rent and the Government was not willing to reimburse lost rent so Councils were required to cover this loss.

In the Budget Update report to Cabinet, it was noted that the Operating Services Department (OSD) had recorded a trading deficit because of the pandemic and this loss would be compensated by the ringfenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Members asked whether this was normal practice. The Acting Chief Finance Officer advised that there was a

ringfence between the HRA and General Fund, however, the OSD was outside both entities because it was operated as a trading account. This practise had been required in the 1980's and CBC had continued the arrangement.

The Acting Chief Finance Officer was asked how much was not covered by the Income Compensation Scheme referred to in paragraph 2.25 of the officer's report. The Acting Chief Finance Officer explained that the council had been reimbursed for their whole claim, however, the scheme did not allow council's to claim for 100% of their losses. In total about 60-65% of the council's losses would be covered.

Members asked about the meaning of the other movements column of the table in paragraph 2.1 of the officer's report and they were informed that there were around 100 small movements which had been too minor to be detailed line by line.

A question was asked about where the information regarding service debts was shown and the Acting Chief Finance Officer advised that this information had been detailed in the report to Cabinet and no debt changes or increased borrowing was expected.

The Acting Chief Finance Officer was asked how long it was likely to take for the impacts of the second national lockdown to be seen. Budget holders had been asked to review their budgets to be included in the budget report to Cabinet in December.

Members enquired about the different types of borrowing referred to in Appendix B of the officer's report and the Acting Chief Finance Officer explained that Local Government usually borrowed from two different places, either internally or the Public Works Loan Board. CBC had decided to go with internal borrowing in the past because it was less costly to use spare money in reserves which were not making large returns.

Members thanked the Acting Chief Finance Officer and the Deputy Chief Accountant for all of their hard work in the challenging circumstances.

RESOLVED –

That the Budget Update report be noted

10 **DEPUTY LEADER - COUNCIL PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader and Service Director - Corporate attended to present a report updating the Forum about the progress of the Chesterfield Borough Council Plan.

The Council Plan 2019 – 2023 was agreed by Council in February 2019. The plan identified the Council's key priorities, objectives and commitments over a four year period. Annual delivery plans are developed to track and challenge progress across the four years.

The current position was outlined in the officer's report. The Covid-19 pandemic had brought fast moving and unprecedented challenges to communities and organisations. Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) had to quickly reprioritise to ensure core services could be delivered, while supporting additional emergency planning, community response and economic measures.

Staff across the Council were re-deployed to support key Covid-19 response activities which included ensuring that key services, such as the crematorium, could be maintained but also supporting new areas of work. New areas of work included processing business grant applications, food and medicine deliveries, supporting testing facilities, town centre ambassadors and supporting the community and voluntary sector volunteering programmes. This had a significant impact on the Council's ability to deliver on elements of the delivery plan for 2020/21. This impact had been assessed alongside the performance progress and some recommendations had been made regarding re-prioritisation and deferral of elements.

Appendix 1 of the officer's report demonstrated the progress which had been made on the 41 milestones which were being tracked during 2020/21 as well as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 63% of milestones within the delivery plan for 2020/21 had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to a medium or high extent.
- 54% of the milestones remained on target for delivery by the end of March 2021.
- A further 22% of milestones were currently rated as amber for delivery, actions had been put into place to improve where possible.
- 24% of milestones are rated red as it was certain that delivery would not be possible during 2020/21.

In the “making Chesterfield a thriving borough” section 58% of the milestones remained on target for delivery in 2020/21. Excellent progress had been achieved on key projects including:

- Commencement of construction on the Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre.
- First phase of commercial development at Waterside.
- Seeking to maximise Staveley Town Deal potential - £500k of funding had been secured so far.
- Successfully bidding for £2.4 million in external funding to help secure maximum benefits from HS2 for Chesterfield communities and businesses.
- Progressing ambitious plans for the Heart of Chesterfield project including securing a further £650k in external funding to support market improvements.
- Refreshing the skills action plan and activities to ensure it would respond to the significant employment and skills challenges emerging from the pandemic, particularly for young people.

There were instances where the milestone would be delivered in terms of Council activity but would not be as successful in terms of outcomes due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are a number of milestones which due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic would not be achievable during 2020/21:

- The HS2 and you programme was paused from March 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on school provision. Conversations with schools have indicated that they would require a significant amount of recovery and catch up time for students and that they may not be able to re-join the programme until 2021.
- Progress on the preparation of the Visitor Economy Action Plan had been delayed as other projects have been prioritised, most notably in relation to the Council’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the visitor economy. The delay in preparing the Action Plan would provide an opportunity to better understand the potential longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on the visitor economy and appropriately respond to these within the Action Plan.
- The events programme had been critically impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Major events for 2020/21 had been cancelled due to social distancing requirements. Teams across the Council worked hard to provide alternative digital provision with a range of activities

for residents of all ages to try. Social media, print and web campaigns had also been launched to support the key aim of economic recovery of our High streets as part of our economic recovery plan.

- Expanding the visitor offer at the Pomegranate and Winding Wheel Theatres would not be possible during 2020/21 due to the social distancing guidance and recovery period required for core provision.
- Progress in the development of the business units at Calow Lane had been impacted by Covid-19 pandemic reprioritisation. Economic Development resources had been focused on economic recovery planning and ensuring key live projects could operate safely within the new health and safety and social distancing guidelines.

In the “improving quality of life for local people” section 73% of the milestones remained on target for delivery in 2020/21. Strong progress had been achieved on key milestones including:

- The Covid-19 pandemic placed a focus on rough sleeping and the Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Getting Everyone In and Keeping Everyone In requirements improved access to support and accommodation.
- The private sector stock condition survey had been completed and work was being undertaken to determine investment priorities.
- The improvement works at Grangewood had been completed as part of the work to deliver year 2 of the five-year housing environmental schemes programme. Phase 1 at Barrow Hill had also been completed and phase 2 was progressing on time and within budget.
- Significant progress against key areas of delivering year 1 of the climate change plan.
- Following successful virtual meetings of the Equality and Diversity Forum virtual events were being planned for late autumn and winter 2020/21.
- Core elements of the Care Leaver Offer had been put in place including council tax support, housing policy changes and key worker activity plus enhanced leisure provision.
- Core elements of the Armed Forces Covenant action plan had been put in place.

There were two milestones that due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic would not be achievable during 2020/21:

- Develop and deliver schemes and trials to increase recycling rates - Maintaining core services has been key during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges waste and recycling services have continued to perform well but there had not been capacity to develop new schemes and trials during this period.
- Plan and deliver the 2020/21 local democracy programme - Conversations with schools has indicated that they will require a significant amount of recovery and catch up time for students and that they may not be able to re-join the programme until 2021.

In the “provide value for money services” section 27% of the milestones remained on target for delivery in 2020/21. One of which, the ICT improvement programme, had been fundamental to enabling services to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic.

48% of the milestones in this priority area had been rated as amber, mainly due to delays caused by the reprioritisation required for Covid-19 or the fluid situation emerging around impact and recovery. These areas were being prioritised in the second half of the year.

There were three milestones that due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic would not be achievable during 2020/21:

- Review the Council’s commercial approach, services and investment portfolios and deliver actions resulting from the review - Covid-19 has had a major impact on the Council’s commercial activity and as the short, medium and longer terms impacts emerge they would inform the review and help to develop our future approach.
- Develop our future ICT Strategy for 2022/2023 onwards - Maintaining the progress on the current ICT programme had been the priority. This had enabled rapid transformation to allow services to keep running during the pandemic. The medium and long-term impacts of the pandemic would have a major influence on the future ICT programme.
- Complete the Investor in People Assessment improving silver scores in key areas - The Investors in People assessment was due to take place in January 2021, however due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic this has been delayed until 2022.

There continued to be ongoing uncertainty around future Covid-19 restrictions. On 5 November 2020 the second national lockdown was announced which would last until 2 December 2020. The pandemic

continued to have a significant impact on community and economic response, core service delivery and Council Plan delivery.

Members enquired whether CBC was still paying compensation to Jomast. The Service Director explained that CBC were paying Jomast for the marketing work they were carrying out to attract tenants. There was a clause in contract regarding rent liability and the Service Director believed that CBC were still liable to pay the rent.

Members asked about the new appointment referred to in the officer's report and the Service Director explained that CBC had successfully applied for Government funding to support High Street recovery and part of this funding was for a new fixed term contract for a full time post within the Town Centre team.

Members noted that the target for recycling had not been achieved but thanked staff for continuing the service during the first national lockdown when many other councils did not.

Members asked about the Economic Recovery Plan and the Service Director explained that CBC had been able to obtain funding for Town Centre work which had been used to make the area Covid-19 secure, marketing and business support.

Members noted that there had been significant impact on the visitor economy because of the cancellation of major events. The Service Director was asked about the inclusion of the Motor Fest and Chesterfield Pride events because CBC did not organise these events. The Service Director explained that a large amount of work had taken place to include all events which take place in the borough.

Members thanked the Service Director for the work which had been carried out relating to rough sleepers but noted that sofa surfers had not been included. It was explained that it was very challenging to break the figures down into categories because it was hard to identify people.

The Service Director was asked for an explanation about the ICT Improvement Programme project being rated red and members were advised that a stop check piece of work needed to be carried out because there had been so much change in response to Covid-19.

Members asked if there was a risk of losing funding if the HS2 Eastern Leg did not go ahead and the Service Director explained that there were clauses to secure funding so if CBC complied with the clauses then the funding would not be lost.

RESOLVED –

That the Council Plan Progress Update report be noted

Councillor Fordham left the meeting at this point.

11 CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE - COVID 19 EMERGENCY PLANNING / BUSINESS CONTINUITY

The Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers and Executive Director attended to present a report about Covid-19 Emergency Planning/Business Continuity.

In 2005 Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) had contracted with Derbyshire County Council to deliver its Emergency Planning and Business Continuity service. The Council benefited from joint working, gaining access to a larger, skilled Emergency Planning team and the provision of a dedicated Emergency Planning resource for 2.5 days per week.

To further strengthen the Council's capacity and co-ordination of emergency and business continuity events, the Council identified two senior officers to act in emergency planning liaison roles. These staff members work alongside the Derbyshire County Council Emergency Planning team and with the Council's Strategic Leadership Team and Corporate Management Team to respond to an emergency or business continuity event.

The Council had detailed emergency and business continuity plans in place, which are regularly updated. Access to the plans could be obtained by authorised personnel through Resilience Direct, an online private network which enabled civil protection practitioners to work across geographical and organisational boundaries during the preparation, response and recovery phases of an event or emergency.

Dependent on the size and scale of the emergency or business continuity event, different types of strategic and tactical groups would be initiated to

effectively 'manage' the event and this would be determined when an emergency or business continuity event was triggered.

At a local level, CBC regularly reviewed and updated service specific business continuity plans. The leadership team reviews, agrees and documents the priority services for protection and restoration in an emergency and this process would then inform the relevant activities which must be undertaken when the business continuity plan is invoked.

Individual Corporate Business Continuity Plans exist in respect of winter planning, flood planning and a flu pandemic.

On 23 March 2020, the government announced the first national lockdown. These conditions and restrictions were unprecedented and required the immediate implementation of business continuity activities so that the Council could prioritise the delivery of key services where it was legal and safe to do so. Whilst most emergencies or business continuity events would be short lived, the Coronavirus pandemic had been unique in that CBC has remained in a business continuity position for nine months and the end date is unknown.

In response to this, the CBC business continuity activity had been and would continue to be delivered in three phases:

1. Response – the work CBC did to deal with the 1st national lockdown.
2. Recovery – the work CBC did to reopen business and bring our workforce back in a covid-19 secure way.
3. Response and recovery – the work CBC has been doing to deal with the 2nd national lockdown whilst supporting communities and businesses in longer term recovery.

The following business continuity structure has been implemented to enable the management of the coronavirus business continuity activity across Derbyshire:

- Chief Executive and Leader attendance at the Derbyshire Local Outbreak Board.
- Executive Director attendance at the Local Resilience Forum Strategic Co-Ordination Group and Recovery Group.

- Corporate Management Team attendance at the Local Resilience Forum Tactical Co-Ordination Group and at specific partner working groups which are focused on communications, community wellbeing including homelessness and workforce.
- Tactical meetings of the CBC leadership team, initially held daily and reduced to twice weekly after moving into the recovery phase.
- Regular communications in place between the Corporate Management Team and their respective portfolio holders.
- Three task and finish groups have been implemented to deliver recovery activities. These groups are focusing on the economy, community wellbeing and the safety of our workforce.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented CBC with unprecedented risks, disruption and changes to working practices. Whilst the business continuity plans have provided clear 'structure' and guidance on process, the Council did not have a 'ready prepared' business continuity plan which could be immediately followed and has adapted to each situation as we have moved further into the pandemic.

During the initial lockdown period the Council had to temporarily close offices, services and facilities and many of our staff were asked to work from home or were redeployed into other roles.

The services which were closed during the response phase of the pandemic were detailed in the officer's report. Many of the services were reopened from July onwards, in a covid19-secure way, but closed again in the second national lockdown from 5 November 2020.

There were a number of challenges in reopening services. To ensure CBC premises were Covid-19 secure customer and employee flow was redesigned, desk spaces were adjusted and additional safety screens and speech transfer systems were provided.

140 service specific risk assessments were developed to ensure safe ways of working. The risk assessments were developed alongside trade union colleagues, who were complimentary about CBC's approach. This activity will not need to be redone as services reopen again as the

Council took the approach of a robust design which would be fit for purpose on a long-term basis.

The following new activities were required during the response and recovery phases and have been coordinated through the tactical task and finish teams:

- Provision of support to local pharmacies to deliver medicines and food parcels. Over 10,000 prescriptions were delivered by CBC staff.
- Provision of marshalling at Covid-19 testing stations.
- Delivery of the 'keeping people in' initiative.
- Delivery of business grants to Chesterfield businesses, totalling £26.95m.
- Delivery of further Test and Trace grants within the community to those on low income and need to self-isolate.
- Delivery of the 2nd phase of business grants which were generated by the need for a 2nd national lockdown and movement to local tiered restrictions.
- Co-ordination and live streaming of virtual meetings.
- Development of new policies to support redeployment, furlough, flexible furlough and agile working.

In support of these activities, the Council developed a central list of available resources, co-ordinated by the HR business partners, and have redirected those staff from 'closed' or low priority services to support the new activities.

Work has taken place to mitigate the negative impacts of business continuity. Work was already underway to strengthen the Council's ICT resilience and put the technology in place to enable staff to work from home. This underpinning work was critical in enabling the Council to maintain core service delivery and protecting staff during the pandemic. The ICT team continued to deliver the ICT Improvement programme as well as manage business as usual activity and support new activities generated through our pandemic business continuity work.

HR Business Partners worked with employees to support them with 'new ways of working'. In recognition of the assistance that staff may need, HR launched an Employee Assistance Programme which enabled the workforce to obtain support by telephone. This service has been very

positive for the few employees who have used it, but take up has been low and further promotion is required.

The Council implemented 'test and trace' procedures and it has been clear from the tracking data collected that the spread of infection had a much bigger impact on our workforce immediately prior to the 2nd phase of lockdown than it did in March 2020. 2% of our workforce have received a positive covid test and 4% are self-isolating because they have been in close contact with someone

who is positive. Implementation of robust test and trace activity across the workplace has been time-consuming and resource hungry. The Council has had no Covid-19 riddor reportable cases, which is testament to the hard work and rigour when developing risk assessments, safe ways of working and test and trace activity.

On 5 November 2020, the government implemented a second national lockdown and the Council responded quickly and effectively. Lessons learned exercises were completed at the end of the first lockdown and this learning has been used to support scenario planning for the second wave. In addition, work has been undertaken to review and revise risk assessments for Tier 2 and Tier 3 local restrictions so that the Council could implement relevant changes quickly.

A temporary grants team had been implemented to ensure that businesses obtain grant funding quickly and efficiently. During the 1st phase of lockdown, grants were administered manually, and the data collection process was very time consuming. For the latest set of grants, administration processes had been streamlined and partially automated using the Council's CRM solution. The processes had been designed and built within a week and improved to allow for 'faster payments' to be made direct to business bank accounts.

The officer's report identified barriers to progress:

- Further work was required to digitise paper based customer records. Completion of this activity would enable agile working to be completed effectively. The Council still issues a large amount of 'post'. This requires office-based staff to print, label and post out documents to customers. Implementation of the Customer Portal, 'My Chesterfield', is the first step toward sending correspondence electronically for those customers who choose to receive their mail in this way.

- Restrictions in availability of staff through isolating or shielding may mean some services need to be reduced or delayed, especially in some specialist areas, where it is difficult to share resources.
- Implementation of a range of collaboration technologies, including the popular Zoom or FaceTime applications, will enable officers to effectively collaborate with community members who may not use Microsoft Teams as a preferred tool.

The officer's report identified the CBC's future plans to continue to respond to the latest set of restrictions, whilst also working on recovery activities.

Members noted that the second lockdown had felt very different and enquired what had changed to enable services and businesses respond more effectively. The Executive Director advised that there had been both positive and negative differences: there had been improved supply and communication but people were fatigued by the first lockdown which had impacted on compliance.

Members emphasised the need for customer records to be digitalised and enquired what information was still kept on paper. The Executive Director explained that some information needed to be stored for a certain period of time and some work cases were kept in hard copy.

It was noted that a need for the Council to be able to use Zoom and Facetime was not just important for community and voluntary organisations but also councillors. This was a key issue which the ICT Team were trying to resolve while ensuring security.

Members enquired how staff were coping with new and old roles. The Executive Director advised that it had been challenging with workloads peaking and troughing. The senior leadership team would be continuing to take a personal approach to understanding how staff were coping.

The Executive Director was asked whether there was a problem with a backlog of routine tasks from the lockdown. Members were informed that staff and tasks needed to be prioritised so non-priority tasks remained which needed to be cleared. This process was being priority driven.

Members enquired why CBC had provided the laptops to Arvato staff and the Executive Director explained that the primary reason was to ensure that all teams could work together and it was a pragmatic approach in the circumstances.

RESOLVED –

That the Covid-19 Emergency Planning/Business Continuity report be noted.