

Gloucestershire County Council Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2019/20 Improvement Plan – Progress Report

AGS Review Reference	Governance matters identified / actions taken	Target Date and Lead Officer
Financial Governance	<p>Future Financial Sustainability / Covid-19</p> <p>The Council identified savings of £10.545m as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process. Delivery of this level of savings will be challenging for the Council. A small contingency is available if savings are not fully met in 2020/21.</p> <p>Actions in response to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To continue to review the financial resilience, strategic risks, the robustness of financial planning and the accuracy of outturn forecasts in order to ensure long term financial sustainability; ➤ Ongoing regular review and reporting of funding, cost pressures and savings, with focus on the Adult Single Programme savings, High Needs, financial pressures within Children and Families and additional pressures re Covid-19; and ➤ Update future years funding forecasts as more details of the Comprehensive Spending Review are announced. <p>In addition, new cost pressures, lost income and unachievable savings targets as a result of the impact of the coronavirus lockdown is being closely managed and monitored. As the long term implications for the Council become more apparent our financial planning will be updated accordingly.</p>	<p>31st March 2021</p> <p>Chief Financial Officer</p>

Position as at December 2020

The Council is on track to deliver over 93% of the 2020/21 savings target which is a great result given that so much time and energy in 2020/21 has been diverted to dealing with the pandemic. The pandemic has resulted in significant additional Council expenditure but through robust financial management it is currently forecast that the costs will be contained within the additional grant funding allocated to GCC.

The Council's biggest financial challenges continue to be additional expenditure in Children's Services associated with the OFSTED improvement programme and the continued overspend in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. In terms of the Children's Services budget this is being closely monitored and the overspend in 2020/21 will be covered from corporately held budgets / reserves. A recovery plan / High Needs Strategy is currently being implemented which aims to ensure the DSG budget is balanced in future years.

The one year Spending Review in November 2020 and the provisional Finance Settlement indicated that there will be sufficient funding available in 2021/22 to fund a robust and balanced budget in 2021/22. This will be confirmed in February 2021 when the final Finance Settlement is announced. There continues to be uncertainty about longer term funding which is likely to remain until a multi year Comprehensive Spending Review is announced – this is anticipated in the Autumn of 2021.

General Reserves are £18.846 million (December 2020) which is considered sufficient to cover unforecast / unexpected expenditure.

AGS Review Reference	Governance matters identified / actions taken	Target Date and Lead Officer
Executive Director's Assurance Statement 2019/20	<p>Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services</p> <p>GCC Children's Services continue on an improvement journey following the Ofsted inspection in 2017. In February 2020, Ofsted undertook their final monitoring visit and the next time they return to Gloucestershire it will be to conduct a full inspection under the inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. During 2019/20 work has continued to enhance our assurance and governance arrangements as part of our wider improvement programme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An Access to Resources Panel has been introduced in order to strengthen management oversight of access to financial assistance for children and families. It is chaired by a member of Senior Leadership Team and comprises of managers from across children's services. Implementation has been supported by detailed written guidance and a series of briefings with locality teams. ➤ A 16 Plus Panel has been introduced to monitor those young people with a pathway plan who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to ensure appropriate preventative action is taken and/or assistance provided. ➤ A detailed piece of work has been completed around care placements which may be considered (by the Regulator) to constitute unregistered provision to ensure there is a clear rationale for the placement, to take action where this need and the child's needs are being met. 	Ongoing Director of Children's Services (DCS)

- We have developed a comprehensive vulnerable children database to ensure there is a clear line of sight across education, early years and social care provision around those children and young people causing greatest concern.
- High Cost Placement Panel continues to provide a mechanism for scrutiny of costs for children with high cost, complex care packages.
- We are continuing to scrutinise agency spend and ensure that time sheets are subject to managerial sign off - this is evidencing high levels of compliance.
- Our Performance Management arrangements have continued to develop in order to bring further service elements within Liquid Logic reporting, thereby reducing our reliance on locally generated data. This is providing for a more exhaustive and rigorous overview of performance.

Children's Services has continued to experience significant costs pressures during 2019/20 with a projected overspend at year end of circa £13.5m. This is due in greater part to external placements and costs associated with agency staffing in social care.

The High Cost Placements Panel continues to provide a mechanism to ensure senior management oversight of individual cases and our Sufficiency Strategy sets our longer term vision to ensure good quality care provision is available for children and young people. The opening of Trevone House during 2020/21 will be a key element in realising that vision.

Our 'grow your own' workforce strategy will also begin to have greater traction on our agency spend as the current cohorts of students, overseas workers and newly qualified staff being able to take up substantive posts over the next 12 months.

The Social Work Academy will also play a key role in ensuring we are able to support an ongoing cohort of students, Assessed and Supported Year in Employment programme (ASYE)

and newly qualified practitioners.

Social work practice quality remains a significant issue in terms of reaching an Ofsted rating that would be seen as reasonable progress and cease to be a reputational risk. Quality audits still demonstrate 'inadequate' practice in too many case files. Quarterly trends are positive but need to move faster. The Social Work Academy training plus targeted leadership interventions are key to tackling this remaining issue.

All Council Ofsted monitoring reports can be viewed [here](#).

Position as at December 2020

The emergence of Covid-19 in March 2020 has had a significant impact on Children's Services, and its regulator Ofsted. It had been anticipated that full inspection would take place in April/May 2020, however, Ofsted suspended its inspection activity until the early Autumn and only re-commenced under a changed programme of monitoring and focused visits.

As Gloucestershire had previously had its final monitoring visit in February, it was subject to a focused visit in October this year. The focused visit was much more akin to a full inspection and involved a team of 5 HMI's, one of whom was a Schools HMI, who looked in detail at effectiveness of the Virtual School and the outcomes for children in care. In the [published letter 20th November 2020](#), Ofsted, inter alia, noted:

- The local authority's response to Covid-19 has been positive, proactive and well managed.
- Despite the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) having to operate virtually, there has been no significant drop-off in its performance. Children in need of help or protection have been seen regularly throughout, as have most children in care and care leavers.
- The quality of practice is still variable, much of it is now more purposeful, more rigorous, more child-focused and more clearly sighted on impact and effectiveness.
- The proportion of audited cases judged by the local authority to be inadequate has fallen significantly.

➤ In the absence of a clear, coherent and well-coordinated approach to services for children and families on the edge of care, the number of children in care continues to increase year-on-year.

➤ Short and long-term placement stability is problematic and some children are still experiencing too many changes of social workers.

With respect to governance, we have continued to develop the actions set out in the previous assurance statement in order to further embed assurance and governance, as part of our wider improvement programme:

➤ Our Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) has been enhanced to encompass a range of thematic and service specific improvement plans and provide a focal point for all improvement activity.

➤ A Permanence Project has been commenced in order to improve our permanence planning and enhance our control of associated expenditure. A panel approach, building on the panel arrangements set out above, has been implemented to review individual cases.

➤ Bronze meetings (twice weekly) chaired by the Interim Director of Safeguarding and Care provide for a sustained grip on practice and service activity during a period of considerable challenge.

➤ Increased the number of forms and data points reported through Liquid Logic to further enhance the rigour of our case recording and performance reporting. The development of the Fostering Service dashboard as an example has enabled greater senior leadership oversight and direction of this important area of practice.

AGS Review Reference	Governance matters identified / actions taken	Target Date and Lead Officer
Chief Fire Officer's Assurance Statement	<p>Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS)</p> <p>GFRS are on an improvement journey and all the work being carried out will move them towards being fully compliant in all areas of governance. However the Service acknowledges that this will take time. A full and robust internal restructure has been completed to secure additional resources which included extensive staff consultation. Following the release of the internal audits last year, an Improvement Board has been established which is made up of both GFRS and GCC senior directors, project management staff and the cabinet portfolio member, the Local Government Association have also attended and supported this. Internal Audit will also be undertaking follow up reviews to provide the independent assurances on progress. As part of the wider integration development plan, the GCC Core Values have been rolled out and aligned across the Service. Staff workshops have been set up to allow staff to raise concerns with fortnightly staff briefings also taking place.</p> <p>Along with the audit findings which are being addressed through the Improvement Board, two causes for concern have been identified following the HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services) Inspection Report and these are in relation to Culture and Values and Business Fire Safety. Action and progress is currently underway in both of these areas and again, are being regularly reviewed as part of the Improvement Board. Finally, the former Chief Fire Officer has been formally charged with fraud and this case is now ongoing.</p> <p>Recommendations implementation will continue to be overseen by the Audit and Governance Committee thereby providing the relevant assurances that these are being addressed in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Actions and progress are monitored by the Improvement Board monthly and the Audit and Governance Committee biannually.</p> <p>Chief Fire Officer</p>

Position as at December 2020

Despite the significant impact of COVID 19 on the day to day operation of GFRS and the associated need to maintain frontline emergency services; GFRS has contributed considerable resources and expertise to the COVID pandemic response across Gloucestershire. The focus on improvement and service development remains unaltered.

The restructure was implemented in April 2020 with a planned review date, as a result a further evolution of the structure is being consulted on with staff and changes will be made by April 2021. This supports the key functions of the service by reducing the breadth of some roles in order to provide capacity for improvement.

Following the previous restructure and the establishment of functions that were 'missing' from the structure e.g. national operational guidance and operational assurance capability, it has become apparent that further capacity will be required in these areas to develop at the pace required locally and to meet the demands of sector wide developments coordinated by the National Fire Chiefs Council as part of the Home Office expectation under the fire transformation programme.

The Business Fire Safety function has a clear improvement plan which is being reviewed to be accelerated in order to complete fire safety audits in a shortened timeframe. Collaboration with other fire and rescue services will secure expert Fire Engineer capacity and provide peer challenge opportunities for quality assurance. HMICFRS have acknowledged the positive direction of travel against this cause of concern.

The GCC Organisational Development approach has evolved and short term dedicated business partner support is now in place to assist the GFRS cultural development cause of concern in line with the GCC approach to ensure further integration of GFRS with the wider organisation. This approach is balancing the local aspiration with the fire sector wide work flowing from the National Fire Chiefs Council as part of the Home Office Fire Transformation Programme. A new promotion and progression procedure has been developed after significant staff consultation which addresses previous concerns about openness and transparency. Coupled with a significant number of permanent appointments to temporary posts this is providing much needed stability and role modelling of the intended approach to values based leadership and inclusivity. Managers are also undertaking employment law and performance management training to improve the early management of workplace relationships and performance and how to conduct high quality investigations and hearings where required. This will support consistency, confidence and clearly demonstrate the expected high standards required

of all staff within GFRS.

GFRS has now established a portfolio management office (PMO) as part of the service governance arrangements. The PMO has oversight of all projects and programmes of work to ensure prioritisation, resourcing and progress against the work programme. This is supported by a refreshed approach to business and team plans which will be linked to individual staff appraisals and key performance indicators for teams linking to the IRMP objectives and GCC corporate indicators. Priority areas of work within the PMO are IRMP development, business planning and fleet and equipment strategies, these priorities will support more effective engagement with the GFRS and GCC governance arrangements to ensure that revenue and capital MTFS timescales are complied with which has been problematic during this initial period of improving the governance within the service.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertook a virtual inspection of the GFRS response to COVID 19 and their findings will be published in January 2021, initial indications are that HMICFRS were positive about the work of GFRS in relation to COVID 19. The follow up cause of concern visit to business fire safety was postponed from late 2020 (due to the COVID 19 inspection programme) and will be scheduled for quarter 1 of 2021. The second cycle of full inspections will begin in 2021 and GFRS will be inspected in tranche 2 (44 FRS's are separated into 3 tranches of 14 or 15 services). Tranche 2 inspections will commence with document requests in May/June 2021, fieldwork in Autumn 2021 to Spring 2022 (GFRS are in the earlier stages of tranche 2) with the results published in summer 2022.

Significant progress is being made against the 124 audit actions (arising from 118 audit recommendations). Oversight by the GFRS Improvement Board is providing challenge and assurance that the agreed actions are being implemented appropriately. Where the audit action is satisfactorily completed but further work would create additional organisational learning or effectiveness the additional development is transferred to the wider GFRS improvement plan for oversight by the GFRS Portfolio Management Office (PMO) and SLT.

Follow up process development

- The Audit Risk Assurance (ARA) team have worked directly with the GFRS Performance and Improvement Manager and GFRS Planning, Strategy and Performance Team from quarter 4 2019/20 to ensure an appropriate process with accessible audit trail to enable Internal Audit follow up delivery.

- GFRS audit trail is accessed via Microsoft Teams. This includes Board papers, the GFRS recommendation tracker and ratification reports with supporting audit documentation per Internal Audit recommendation.
- The Board was attended by ARA initially in May 2020, to enable understanding of Board agenda content and approach.
- From June 2020 onwards, relevant ARA auditors have attended Board meetings on a monthly basis and have been able to engage in discussions, challenge as appropriate and raise relevant queries. Internal Audit follow up activity on an individual recommendation basis also commenced from June 2020.

Each Board meeting attended by ARA was chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and followed a set agenda including updates from GFRS Area Leads regards specific audit recommendations. It was evident through the meetings that Board members actively queried and challenged the position on each presented recommendation, to ensure assurance provided by the GFRS Area Lead was appropriately evidenced to enable Board formal sign off.

ARA continues to work with the GFRS Performance and Improvement Manager to support further development regards Internal Audit access to audit trail and the audit trail content.

GFRS Improvement Board Position Statement

As at 17th December 2020, the Board has signed off 91 (73%) out of the 124 actions (from 118 audit recommendation) total as implemented. These are detailed in the below table:

GFRS Improvement Board position as at 17th December 2020	
Total audit recommendations / actions	118 audit recommendations. 6 recommendations were split out by GFRS into an interim action and a medium term action, totalling 124 actions within the GFRS Improvement Board tracker. The 6 split recommendations were relevant to budget monitoring; budget setting; income and cash handling; disposals; and procurement cards.

Actions confirmed as implemented by the Board	91
Actions in progress	16
Actions in progress with the wider organisation (GCC)	17

The positive direction of travel has continued since October and the statistics being prepared for the Audit and Governance Committee Meeting in January 2021 will show that:

- “Actions confirmed as implemented by the Board” have increased;
- Actions confirmed by Audit as “Agreed – No Further Action Required” have increased; and
- “Actions awaiting feedback from GCC” are decreasing.

The report for the [Audit and Governance Committee Meeting on 30th October 2020](#) concluded that as at October 2020:

- Covid-19 has placed significant pressures on public services and has impacted (and continues to impact) the Council’s and GFRS’s priorities, objectives and risk environment. Even during this very challenging period, the Board has made positive progress and applied a strong drive to complete the implementation of the Internal Audit recommendations with their target to have all recommendations implemented by 2020/21 year end.
- Internal Audit recognises the hard work that GFRS has placed into addressing the audit recommendations in a timely manner, particularly continuing to focus on these actions during the pandemic, which has not been an easy task and demonstrates a strong commitment to driving good governance within GFRS.
- A further Internal Audit Follow Up Progress Report is scheduled to be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee at the March 2021 meeting or potentially sooner if all recommendations have been implemented.

The report contained additional feedback from GFRS Improvement Board Members and attendees which supports the cultural journey

within GFRS as known and latterly confirmed by the HMICFRS inspection.

Learning identified through this process is being shared with departments across GCC resulting in organisational policy and procedure changes for the benefit of the whole council.

The PMO within GFRS is in the process of phasing the wider development programme which will begin fully in 2021. Capacity to undertake this work has been created by the focus on addressing the audit actions to clear this work. The development plan will be presented to CLT in February 2021.

The Chief Fire Officer will attend the January 2021 Audit and Governance Committee meeting to provide a progress update and answer questions from the committee.

AGS Review Reference	Governance matters identified / actions taken	Target Date and Lead Officer
Director's Assurance Statement	<p>The recruitment and retention of employees in hard to fill, critical positions</p> <p>There is increasing evidence that we are struggling to recruit and retain qualified and experience staff in certain critical positions. There are a number of factors influencing this including a lack of those with the right skills and experience, the increasing buoyant job market, our salaries are falling behind other councils and the private sector as well as the perception of local government. In addition, the aging profile of our workforce means that there is an ongoing loss of key experienced workers.</p> <p>Actions in response to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of a workforce plan that highlights critical, hard to fill roles and areas where critical individuals are likely to move on with targeted succession plans; ➤ Review of our employment offer and recruitment practice to improve promotion of Gloucestershire County Council as a place to work and the County as a place to live; ➤ Review of our pay and grading structure and benchmarking of key roles to ensure that our offer is competitive including use of market supplements and other payments where appropriate; ➤ A targeted recruitment and retention programme for children's social workers; ➤ A 'grow our own' programme for key roles utilising the apprenticeship levy including areas such as future managers, lawyers, project managers, social workers, planning, highways 	<p>31st March 2021</p> <p>Director of Digital and People Services</p>

	<p>and professional support roles; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An apprenticeship programme targeted at schools and college leavers to encourage them to work in local government. 	
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Position as at December 2020

Council Wide

A ‘grow our own’ programme for key roles utilising the apprenticeship levy including areas such as future managers, lawyers, project managers, social workers, planning, highways and professional support roles.

The apprenticeship programme for progression for existing staff has grown significantly over the last two years. All areas apart from lawyers have/are being covered. There are discussions within Legal Services about the progression routes. We have four current members of staff undertaking Law programmes at level 3 and level 6.

An apprenticeship programme targeted at schools and college leavers to encourage them to work in local government.

The ‘School Leavers’ programme has been a positive approach as an introduction and is due to draw to a close in August 2020. All eight are on course to complete. We currently have 53 recruited apprentices across the organisation with an average age of 20 years old.

Corporate Resources and Economy, Environment and Infrastructure

Hard to fill posts have been identified in relation, particularly to experienced Childcare lawyers where targeted advertising campaigns and the use of welcome payments have not yielded the quantity and calibre of applicants desired due to the limited numbers of potential recruits. Therefore, a longer term but more sustainable strategy is being put in place to recruit paralegal staff keen to qualify as a solicitor and to support them through training while giving them experience in-house. The ‘grow our own’ approach will also be applied in relation to posts within other areas of law where in general local authority salaries are not as attractive as those candidates can obtain in the private sector.

Market Rate supplements have been applied to Highways Major Projects, Transport Planning and HDM posts where salaries and

benefit packages are not as attractive as those in central government or private sector organisations. At the same time, the use of apprenticeships to develop skill sets, knowledge and experience for future roles is increasing, particularly in Highways and in planning more broadly.

Work has also been undertaken within Strategy and Challenge to develop generic Project Managers for the future by a cross organisation apprenticeship training programme.

All the work above will be a continuing exercise as the investment and results are for a sustainable and longer term approach to the issues around recruitment and retention.

Fire and Rescue Service

A Workforce Planning Group has been established to co-ordinate and oversee the approach to workforce planning at GFRS including oversight of succession planning, future skills requirements and gaps, talent management and development pathways for specialist and hard to fill positions. An agreed service wide approach to workforce planning has also been developed and will be launched in the near future. The Workforce Planning Group reviews regular management information in support of recruitment and retention and provides strategic governance for positive action to increase our representation from under represented groups. Firefighter apprenticeships, with a recruitment campaign for Wholetime Firefighters anticipated taking place during 2021.

Adult Services

The key 'Hard to fill' posts in Adult Social Care remain as in previous years, those of Experienced Social Workers and posts in Senior Social work roles.

This year has seen the introduction of Social Work Apprenticeships which enable us to offer a pathway to social work qualification to experienced social care assessors who have often been in their roles for a number of years and are geographically committed to the county for personal and family reasons. These individuals bring a maturity and stability to the workforce and it is good that we are able to offer these opportunities after the demise of the previous costly traineeships. It has also been possible to offer relocation payments to appointees in certain hard to fill roles and to improve our attraction package by the further development of a career map within the service.

Roles	Turnover Q4 17/18 to Q2 20/21	Current turnover rate
Qualified SW roles	Between 10.3% to 18.0%	10.7%
ASC Not Qualified Roles (incl. Learning Disabilities)	Between 5.7% to 15.0%	5.7%
Front-line SW (ASYE,SW,SSW):	between 10.4% and 20.2%	12.98%
Overall ISC Turnover:	between 8.8% and 15.1%	8.8%

Children's Services

The key hard to fill posts are experienced social workers; those who have in the main have completed their ASYE and have post ASYE experience. We have also found it difficult to recruit high quality team managers.

We have introduced a number of different recruitment pipelines to increase our social worker staff group. These include recruiting from overseas, using recruitment agencies to source permanent experience social workers.

Whilst we have also introduced the apprenticeship for those who wish to train to become a social worker, this will continue to strengthen our ASYE population, but will build our pipeline for the future. This does put us at risk of an inexperienced workforce, which we are managing with agency workers, whilst we are supporting AYSEs to build up their practice experience.

We review our salaries on a yearly basis and we adjust the welcome and retention payments in line with the market. We have a dedicated Social Work Academy, which offers training and development not just to ASYEs but to staff across children's services. Supervision is more focused and regular than it has been previously and the introduction of the new NAAS framework offers further career development and structure in relation to professional development.

Year	Vacancy rate	Agency rate	Turnover rate
April 2018	32.78%	33.5%	17.9%
April 2019	26.78%	37.9%	17.4%
April 2020	18.96%	30.06%	12.9%
December 2020	12.68%	24.42%	15.0%

AGS Review Reference	Governance matters identified / actions taken	Target Date and Lead Officer
Corporate Governance	<p>Covid-19 Impact on Governance</p> <p>In late March 2020 the Government announced a national lockdown and advised that all employees should work from home except those engaged in essential services who were unable to work from home. The Council implemented home working during the week commencing 16th March 2020. There were a number of consequences that impacted upon the governance of the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Council bi-election which was due to be held on 26th March 2020 was suspended; ➤ Council and committee meetings were suspended until further notice; ➤ Where necessary, decisions were either taken by officers under the Council's scheme of delegation using urgency provisions where appropriate and having sought the required authorisations, or postponed; ➤ The Chief Executive met weekly with all Group Leaders to share information and discuss issues or concerns arising from members; ➤ The Council complied with the relevant Procurement Policy Notices issued by the Cabinet Office which ensured that suppliers were paid promptly, direct awards made for urgently needed goods and services and where relevant relief given to suppliers who would be critical in supporting the recovery; ➤ Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) met frequently (remotely and reducing over time to 2/3 times per week) to share information and direct the Council's response to the pandemic; 	Ongoing Chief Executive

- Council Officers contributed to national, regional, county-wide response and resilience groups to co-ordinate the response to the pandemic;
- A major community led response to providing support and assistance to the vulnerable and those in need, was developed by the Local Authorities, community and commercial organisations and individuals; and
- Communications channels were opened to keep Councillors and staff informed as the pandemic, and the Council's response developed.

The Council has responded by:

- Setting up an internal emergency response structure, including gold, silver and bronze levels with cells to target specific tactical issues, in line with best practice. The governance structure can be found [here](#);
- Putting measures in place to re-establish democratic decision-making and Overview and Scrutiny using digital/remote technologies;
- Establishing and monitoring a Covid-19 organisational risk register;
- Developing Business Continuity Management plans for all service areas and coordinated on an ongoing basis by a Business Continuity Management cell;
- Continuing to ensure that executive decisions are recorded in line with the requirements of the constitution;
- Ensuring best practice is followed in terms of documenting and recording operational decision-making in response to the emergency;
- Maintaining delivery of the majority of Council Services via home working;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supporting and co-ordinating a significant community led response to the pandemic including the administration of a £80k community fund and local delivery of a Community Help Hub; and ➤ Developing and implementing a Recovery Plan to return (restart suspended services), retain (keep and sustain any improved new ways of working), resist (resist the temptation to simply return to doing things as before) and reimagine (consider new ways of delivering services after the pandemic). 	
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Position as at December 2020

The pandemic has continued to impact upon the Council in a number of ways, the most significant of which are:

- The continuing need for the vast majority of staff to continue to work from home on an extended basis.
- The introduction and implementation of new powers, duties and responsibilities in order to control and manage the spread of Covid-19.
- The challenges of adapting council premises and services in order to continue to serve the local population whilst minimising the risk of exposure to the virus to the public and staff.
- The need to provide support towards the resilience of local communities and people against financial hardship resulting from the virus, in particular vulnerable children, families, adults and older people.
- The task of leading planning for economic resilience and recovery across local partners.

In order to rise to these challenges and maintain robust Governance, the Council has:

- Adapted its internal emergency response structures to be better suited to the enduring nature of the emergency. This has included twice weekly GOLD meetings, weekly SILVER meetings incorporating tactical management of the pandemic with co-ordination of GCC's recovery activity and operational BRONZE meetings for relevant service areas.

- Agreeing a Local Outbreak Management Plan and putting in place partnership structures for its governance and delivery.
- Continued to support the full range of Council and Committee meetings to operate in a virtual environment using web-conferencing software.
- Keeping county councillors informed about the emergency response through regular all member email briefings.
- Continuing to promote transparent and compliant decision making by ensuring that all executive decisions are published on the Council's website in accordance with the law and the constitution.
- Providing a wide range of weekly data and intelligence on the impact of the pandemic to support Council decision-making.
- Continuing to maintain a Covid-19 risk register and reviewing it on a regular basis.
- Putting in place clear protocols and templates to govern the use of new powers of direction and enforcement.
- Keeping Business Continuity Plans under constant review, and putting in place a clear protocol for assessing risk and taking decisions around service closure and reinstatement in response to changes in the prevalence of Covid in the community and government guidance.
- Establishing processes for recording, monitoring and reporting Covid-related spend in order to ensure that additional funding is used appropriately and effectively, and to manage the impact of the pandemic on the Council's financial sustainability.
- Ensuring appropriate governance and decision making is in place for Emergency Grant Funding to support individuals in crisis as a result of the pandemic.
- Ensuring that information governance requirements are met with respect to all new activities involving the processing of personal data, including putting in place Data Privacy Notices and conducting Data Privacy Impact Assessments and secure infrastructure for compliant transfer of data between partners.

- Establishing processes for the rapid recruitment and redeployment of staff (often at short notice) to support the emergency response, including local test and trace activity, welfare checks and enforcement support for those self-isolating, outbreak management and mass testing pilots.
- Continuing to ensure that procurement decisions are taken appropriately, including making use of emergency powers where appropriate.
- Rolling out updated DSE self-assessments to ensure that staff have an appropriate working environment and making additional equipment available to staff in order that they can work safely from home.
- Adapting all Council premises to be Covid safe, providing advice to site managers and schools and carrying out spot checks to ensure compliance.
- Commissioning additional support for staff for mental health and wellbeing and personal resilience, and providing advice and training to managers.
- Monitoring staff health and wellbeing through a series of online pulse surveys, and weekly monitoring of sickness/absence data by GOLD.