

HILLINGDON COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

A SPECIAL REPORT TO THE CABINET

Cabinet Members	Councillor Ray Puddifoot MBE All Cabinet Members
Cabinet Portfolios	Leader of the Council All Cabinet Portfolios
Report author	Mark Braddock Senior Democratic Services Manager / Chief Executive's Office
Papers with report	Appendix A - Extract of Resident Feedback

HEADLINES

Executive Summary

This is a special report to the Cabinet setting out the extensive effort to-date by the Council, its staff and local community in response to the Coronavirus National Emergency.

The report is in **four parts** which highlight:

1. The continuing delivery of key local services to residents and how services have adapted proactively and with innovation in response;
2. The new community services and assistance established to directly support those affected by the pandemic, including vulnerable residents and businesses.
3. Recent emergency decisions taken by the Leader of the Council for Cabinet's due ratification and;
4. How, at this unprecedented time, the Council and community have come together, moving forward to better times.

This report includes data, information and decisions during late March and April and in some cases up to 11 May 2020. Therefore, given the lead in time to report to Cabinet, there will have been substantial new activity that has taken place prior to consideration.

Those reading should note that the operation of Council services and its response may change over the coming months, adapting to both local circumstances and importantly UK Government advice.

For the latest local information, visit:

hillingdon.gov.uk/coronavirus

Putting our Residents First	This report is about how Hillingdon Council has and continues to put residents first at a time of national emergency. The breadth of activity detailed fulfil all Council objectives of: <i>Our People; Our Natural Environment; Our Built Environment; Our Heritage and Civic Pride; Strong financial management.</i>
Financial Cost	The financial implications of the pandemic upon the Council are set out in more detail at the end of the report.
Policy Overview Committees	All committees
Relevant Ward(s)	Borough-wide

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1. Welcomes the substantial effort by the Council and the community groups to deliver an unprecedented local response to support Hillingdon residents during the Coronavirus National Emergency;**
- 2. Requests the Deputy Chief Executive communicates the Cabinet's gratitude for the critical work by Council staff, particularly front-line workers during this time;**
- 3. Ratifies the Emergency Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council, as set out in the report, and for formal public record.**

Reasons for recommendation

To set out the extensive local response in Hillingdon to the COVID-19 pandemic to-date and the unparalleled operations in play to ensure the continued delivery of essential public services, including many that have been adapted and innovated, or created from start, to support residents during this national emergency.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Council considers different options when delivering services to residents, particularly operationally. In the case of this pandemic, however, the Council has also been required to follow UK Government advice, new emergency laws and regulations in a wide variety of areas.

Policy Overview Committee comments

None at this stage, however, this will be an important area for future monitoring by relevant Committees, as part of the later recovery phase.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background to the local response

Upon the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) to the UK in late January 2020, and the resulting global pandemic, the UK Government has undertaken unprecedented peace-time measures to save lives and protect the NHS. By the end of March, a number of significant nationwide instructions have been placed upon the population in a combined national effort to defeat the virus:

- **20 March** - the closure of schools, various entertainment venues, public houses and leisure centres;
- **22 March** - where 1.5 million people in England with certain health conditions were asked to self-isolate (shielded) for 12 weeks;
- **23 March** - a nationwide 'lock-down' instructing people to stay at home, permitting only essential travel and closures of most businesses and facilities. This includes the ability for one form of exercise a day and;
- **25 March** - following Royal Assent of the Coronavirus Act, new emergency powers to defeat the virus, support public services and the economy, backed up with law enforcement for the new social distancing measures.
- **10 May** - the Prime Minister announced a plan for the gradual reopening of society, starting by allowing people to spend more time outdoors and for those that could not work from home to return to the workplace, avoiding public transport. Additionally, a new COVID-19 Alert System with five levels would govern how quickly lockdown restrictions could be eased. On 11 May, the plan was published in Parliament in detail.

These national instructions have had a significant impact on everyone's daily lives and combined with social distancing measures e.g. being 2 metres away from other people, they have led to dramatic changes in the way we all experience our homelife, work and the outside world; in particularly our interaction (or lack of) with others.

Keeping Hillingdon's many green parks and open spaces open at this time has been both a physical and mental health lifeline to many residents for their daily exercise, particularly those who do not have access to their own garden. There is also the real financial impact on household budgets, with some people losing jobs and many others furloughed until they can go back to work or their businesses and the economy can start to rebound from the pandemic.

The internet has played a crucial role in connecting many families and work colleagues together whilst at home. However, for many of the more vulnerable in society this has been a particularly difficult time. For the older generations and also those with health conditions who are shielded by the NHS, there are social consequences of not seeing their loved ones or not having any family to call on, feeling perhaps lonelier at this time. For some residents, it has also been difficult to get essential food and vital medications whilst staying at home, requiring important interventions locally to assist them. Some may also have experienced domestic abuse arising from the stay at home instructions.

Feedback from frontline Council staff, highlighted later in this report, has also shown the stark struggles some vulnerable residents are facing as a result of the pandemic and also for those caring for them, including residents with dementia, those recently bereaved, and some that cannot operate technology to access information and services online.

Importantly, council staff who are key workers have been able to continue to travel for essential work purposes and this has been critical in continuing to provide, and importantly step-up, our direct support to residents to assist both in their caring, physical and mental health needs. It is also essential in operating the Council's community hub, providing new services to residents, explained later in this report.

This report shows how the Council jumped into action, working with partner organisations, ensuring key resident services could continue to be delivered and how many have adapted during the pandemic. It updates the Cabinet on work of the new community hub and new services directly residents, such as bespoke personal shopping and emergency food parcels. It also shows how the Council is implementing the UK Government's policies locally, particularly in support of local businesses.

Importantly, throughout the report it demonstrates the critical work of Council staff during these emergency times and how they have come together to **put our residents first**. This drive and energy by staff demonstrates the resilience of the London Borough of Hillingdon to continue to support residents as it moves forward together, to better times ahead.

PART 1

CONTINUED DELIVERY OF KEY SERVICES, ADAPTING OTHERS IN RESPONSE

This section of the report sets out how many key council services are being delivered to residents during the pandemic and how they have adapted proactively, creatively and innovatively in response. Regrettably, since late March, some specific facilities and events have been closed or cancelled - and remain closed as of 11 May - due to UK Government advice.

Essential closures and cancellations

Due to Government advice on social distancing, the following facilities continue to be closed (as of 11 May) until further notice:

- Playgrounds, outdoor gyms and tennis courts
- Hillingdon leisure centres
- Haste Hill and Uxbridge public golf courses
- Battle of Britain Bunker Exhibition and Visitor Centre, Uxbridge
- Compass Theatre, Ickenham
- Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip
- Hillingdon young people's centres / Merrimans Respite Care
- Adult learning centres - with a move to online learning
- Day provision at Grassy Meadow Dementia Resource Centre and Queens Walk Resource Centre
- Early Years Centres (open for vulnerable children and key worker)
- Schools, following Government advice (but open for key worker/vulnerable children)
- Children's centres - with the exception of Colham Manor, South Ruislip, Barra Hall and Harefield children's centres for pre-booked midwifery appointments only
- Hillingdon Rural Activities Garden Centre - but instead operating a gardening delivery service
- Hillingdon libraries and events

A number of popular events have also been cancelled or postponed until further notice:

- VE Day 75 street parties on 8 May and a special event at Manor Farm, Ruislip. However alternative ways to remember this important day online were promoted
- Family Fishing Fun Days (26 July and 9 August)
- Tennis sessions
- Carers' Forum
- Easter FIESTA (Monday 6 to Friday 17 April)
- Litter-picking events
- All Mayoral engagements in the community
- Hayes Community Family Fun Day

Where tickets have been sold, the Council will be contacting people to let them know and to process refunds.

Hillingdon's Library Service

With residents unable to visit libraries and access physical stock, many have turned instead to the host of online resources available from the libraries website. The service has adapted to enable online membership for residents who weren't previously library members to access online resources. During April:



- BorrowBox - borrowing of e-books and e-audiobooks has increased by 59%. New titles have been added to the collection to meet demand.
- PressReader - reading of online national and international newspapers and magazines has increased by 48%.
- Britannica Online - e-books, non-fiction and learning have seen an increase in 67%.
- RB Digital Magazines - has seen a 28%
- Transparent Language Online - language learning, has seen a 171% increase.

The Home Library Service resumed on 6th April and the Mobile Library restarted service on 28 April. Social distancing means staff cannot enter residents' homes and, therefore, it is focussed on housebound residents who can collect books from outside their front doors. Upon the start of the service, half of those receiving it at home have agreed to restart their book deliveries.

Additionally library staff have been conducting online video reading groups via Zoom, and keeping in touch with groups and individual residents on email. The Visually Impaired Reading Group has continued with CDs being posted out to them.

ICT have also assisted the service in enabling residents to research their ancestry and family history online, where previously residents had to visit a Library to do this.

Social Media is also being used by the libraries to both update and entertain residents, including quizzes, craft activities and worksheets, with videos made by library staff working from home or filming storytimes in empty libraries.

Due to the closure of libraries, fines have been suspended and renewals will happen automatically.

Many of the staff working in the library service have been redeployed to work in the new Community Hub referred to later in the report.

Sport and Physical Activity for Older residents

With leisure centres and physical activity events suspended, this has impacted on older people, and in particular the Dementia Friends coffee mornings (held in libraries), chair-based exercise sessions (held in libraries), tea-dances (5 in total), and the walks programmes (20 across the borough). Therefore, staff have telephoned or emailed 414 residents who were registered on these schemes to ask after their welfare and general wellbeing and sign-post them to any

support they require. 57% have requested follow-up phone calls which take place. This is integrated with the community hub created, detailed later in this report.

Additionally, staff have created a 'Buddy Pack' which is a small resource pack sent out weekly that includes a variety of puzzles, quizzes, songs, poems, reminiscence stories, and chair-based exercises. This resource pack is emailed or delivered directly to the residents home. Volunteers from the [Uxbridge Amblers](#) are providing this delivery service. So far, 89 packs have been delivered or emailed out.

An online WhatsApp singing group has also been set up with some residents in the dementia friends' coffee morning. To date, this has been a great success as many would have enjoyed singing at the regular coffee morning sessions. A Zoom video meeting took place on Thursday 23 April for the early onset dementia friends group, and the intention is to hold these weekly.

Social Care / Early Years Services

Through the use of a special Government grant to local authorities, the Leader of the Council agreed to provide homecare, outreach and bed based providers within Social Care a one-off lump sum at the end of March equivalent to 10% of their business turnover with the Council (£1.9m). In addition to this, the Council has agreed to pay in advance each month rather than in arrears based on actuals.

The Council has been supporting providers of social care services with emergency supplies of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Over the last 6 weeks the Council has distributed more than 600,000 gloves, masks, aprons, eye protection and hand sanitizers to Council and contracted providers in the Borough.

The Leader of the Council has agreed to waive parental fees of children who are unable to attend nursery due to restrictions at the three Early Years Centres in the Borough. The Leader also agreed to credit parents for the period 21-31 March, when they were unable to use services. These Centres have remained open supporting 25 vulnerable children of key workers to enable parents to work in front line services and 4 Children's Centres have been supporting the delivery of face to face midwifery services.



The Council has set up 18 stepdown flats at Parkview to provide an urgent response to out of hospital care during the pandemic. This has meant that people are able to leave hospital quickly, for a period of rehabilitation and isolation for 14 days before returning to their place of residence. This has been invaluable in the support to the whole health system and protecting the NHS by ensuring that beds in hospitals are available to those that need it.

The Merrimans respite care unit was closed on 23 March due to the nature of the vulnerable people that use the service. To further support people leaving hospital, a 9 bed unit of residential care for older adults is being provided for those with more complex needs. Residents are receiving a very high level of step down support to aid their recovery.

All care providers through the pandemic are being supported by Council staff, who make calls to every provider, every day, 7 days per week to ensure that they have the staff, PPE required and are completing the London wide situation reports that allow the Council to monitor their performance and highlight any issues closely.

Hillingdon has 1337 older adult care home beds provided by 30 providers in the Borough, and staff have visited these services, worked alongside health colleagues to be part of the Care Home Visiting Service. Where there are virtual GP rounds, Community Matrons visits and joint PPE training and joint resident and staff testing, help deliver support where it is needed most.

The Council has commissioned out of hospital emergency homecare funded by the CCG, which has provided an exit into the community for both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients who require some support at home following discharge. This service was rapidly increased in the number of hours being delivered and works alongside the Council's reablement team, who have been supporting up to 40 people each week in the community with their rehabilitation.

The Council has continued to contract home care providers to deliver approx 15,000 hours of care per week and both staff and providers have done an outstanding job at maintaining services despite the challenges faced as a front-line care service.

For the services provided by the Council itself, these have seen staff redeployed to the frontline to provide care and support to residents to maintain a good level of continuity of care.

Positive feedback from providers and residents has been received and some of this is highlighted later in the report.

Adult Social Care

Whilst the Coronavirus Act 2020 introduced the option of 'Care Act easements', in the event that councils were unable to meet their existing statutory duties, in Hillingdon Adult Social Care has not needed to utilise easements to-date and has continued to meet all aspects of its statutory duties, continuing with essential visits to older people requiring care, wherever this is necessary.

In some areas, the Council has been able to offer an enhanced service. For example, the Hospital Social Work team moved to 7 day working and a full 'Discharge to Assess' model, working with health partners to ensure timely discharges, in keeping with Government guidelines.

In other areas, staff have dealt with significant increases in demand as care and support needed to be changed rapidly to reflect guidance on social isolation. Social Workers have been deployed flexibly to meet areas of highest demand. The Adult Social Work service has also contributed to the wider Council offer in relation to shielding, again moving to 7 day working; providing professional support to the Community Hub and assisting with calls. Around 60 Social Workers have contributed to this work and Adult Social Care have made hundreds of welfare visits to the most clinically vulnerable.

Children's Services

Children's social care services have continued to support children at risk of harm. Children who are supported through a Child Protection Plan continued to be visited face-to-face with support to ensure they are safe from harm. All children with an allocated social worker, including children looked after and those who have left care, continue to be in touch with their social workers by phone and video conferencing on at least weekly basis. A whole approach continues to be taken, supporting foster carers and residential provisions with advice, counselling, extra resources or deployment of staff from other parts of the service.

There has continued to be stability and continuity for our children in care during this time. The majority of meetings involving professionals, families and children have been conducted on line and this had a positive impact on participation of the children, families and professionals who otherwise would not have been able to travel to meetings. Staff have shown an amazing level of determination and dedication and courage in supporting and keeping children in Hillingdon safe.



The analysis of risk and pressure in the service during the pandemic has led to a strengthening of the front door into the service to ensure that we are dealing effectively with any increase in demand, for example through an increased risk of domestic abuse.

Staff use the correct PPE when visiting, to ensure they are keeping the families and children safe. As with other parts of social care services, staff in children's services have been deployed to assist in the Community Hub.

Supporting Schools

In response to the pandemic, the Council's Education Teams have been supporting schools, child care providers and other settings to remain open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Currently there are 13 schools closed out of 103 schools providing this essential schooling. The Council has also been coordinating with schools to order laptops for vulnerable Year 10 pupils. School place modelling is also being adapted to manage possible changes in demand as the UK moves out of the lockdown.

Alongside this, there are many education statutory duties that the Council is still required to discharge, therefore striking the right balance between incident management and business as usual will be the focus for the next term ahead.

In terms of learning whilst at home, schools and the Government have published online educational resources to help children to learn at home. These websites have been identified by some of the country's leading educational experts and offer a wide range of support and resources for pupils of all ages.

Further resources including virtual teacher-led lessons were launched by the Government on 20 April. This information is available to all schools locally for parents to support their child's

education and development. All schools have been signposted to access these resources to support parents / carers with home learning.

The Hillingdon Virtual School exists for children in care to develop their education. Officers in conjunction with social workers have been undertaking assessments to ensure educational needs continue to be met. All statutory work associated with Personal Education Plans completion remains compliant albeit delivered remotely using Google Meet conferencing. Despite the disruption, all PEPs for the spring term have been held and written up, maintaining a 100% completion rate. One to one tuition has been maintained online and officers have also introduced group tuition to ensure that learning isn't significantly impacted and children's progress does not regress. The Virtual School has also worked with social workers to identify those children who do not have access to ICT and home WiFi as part of the Government laptop / tablet scheme.

Children with Special Education Needs & Disabilities

Whilst school settings have closed their doors, they have remained open for vulnerable children. Statutory functions to support children, young people, schools and parents/carers through this period have continued, through the processing of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Staff have been working with schools to ascertain whether children and young people are accessing provision and supporting pupil risk assessments to determine whether they are safer at home or in school. Staff have also used online technology to continue to fulfil statutory responsibilities including virtual weekly SEND panels for new requests for Education, Health and Care needs assessments and through virtual Annual Reviews with schools.

Educational Psychology Services and SEND Advisory Services are both delivering services innovatively in response to the pandemic. Psychological support is being provided to school staff, parents, carers and young people as an extension to their critical incident support during this time. SEND Advisory services are providing a triaged service to support schools, parents, carers and young people with resources and provision at this time. Uptake on both services are increasing on a weekly basis and are being promoted through the existing education infrastructure and networks. Staff continue to deliver virtual panels for pupils who may require Early Support Funding.

As a result of the pandemic, officers have established a virtual Special Schools' Forum which comprises all Hillingdon special schools which meets fortnightly. This has allowed for key messages to be disseminated to the special school community and has allowed members to share best practice. One positive outcome to come from this has been the utilisation of breakout spaces for pupils who do not have access to appropriate breakout spaces at home or closeby.

Keeping parents and carers updated on the support available for children with SEND has been crucial at this time and has been an important part of how the service has responded.

Democracy and Governance

Local democracy is at the heart of how the Council works for residents. At the end of March, under the direction of the Leader of the Council, Democratic Services activated the Council's Continuity of Governance (Pandemic) Protocol, re-prioritising Hillingdon's governance arrangements.



The Council's robust and responsive cabinet decision-making process has continued to perform well throughout this emergency to put residents first.

This vital decision-making process makes key service, financial, policy and procurement decisions. Since the lockdown, the Leader of the Council has made use of his Emergency Power in the Constitution for Coronavirus related decisions. 'Business as usual' Cabinet Member decisions, whilst prioritised, continue electronically on a daily basis supporting the future delivery of council services.

A brief suspension of council meetings during April was necessary due to social distancing requirements and, legally, in anticipation of new Government regulations permitting virtual meetings. During this time, Democratic Services, Group Office Staff and ICT worked effectively together to provide an innovative virtual meeting solution, supporting Councillors to transition.



From 7 May 2020 essential Council, Cabinet and planning committee meetings are now being held virtually using Google Meet and are simultaneously streamed live on the [Council's YouTube channel](#) for maximum public engagement. The Major Applications Planning Committee held on 7 May is believed to be the first planning committee in the UK, if not worldwide, using such virtual live technology.

For planning committees, due to social distancing, the temporary suspension of physical public speaking rights has been approved and replaced with written, visual and video representations instead. By allowing such representations, it ensures technology is not a barrier to residents and others who wish to put their views across upon receipt of a valid petition.

Education admissions appeals, if received, will be heard by independent panel members with parents using Google Meet and its telephone-conferencing capability.

At the time of writing, the Council's Mayor-making AGM is due to take place on 14 May with all Members invited to attend on-line. With Ward surgeries unfortunately closed at this time due to social distancing, Ward Councillors are continuing to represent and actively keep in touch with residents and deal with queries electronically or virtually.

Working with the Leader of the Council, Democratic Services will keep democratic processes - and public engagement with them - under review and based on the latest Government advice.

Parks and open spaces

As one of the UK's **greenest** boroughs, the Council has kept its many parks and green spaces open, but has advised residents to ensure they observe Government guidance on social distancing and exercise. Ruislip Lido has electronic display signs displaying these important rules.



Residents are able to access these for their essential daily exercise - whether that is for runs, cycles or walks. This assists with physical activity, general health and mental wellbeing. However, to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus, residents are advised not to use park benches and all playgrounds, outdoor gyms, courts, skate parks, drinking fountains and toilets have been closed temporarily.

Parks have moved online though, and through the [Our Parks' initiative](#), there are regular online exercise or workout sessions hosted by coaches or trainers in parks across the UK including Barra Hall, Hillingdon Court and Harefield Village Green in Hillingdon. Residents participate at home and can join-up for these sessions to watch live free of charge, funded by the Council.



It is also important to note, that despite the pandemic, the usual grass cutting and horticultural work continues across all our open spaces and roadsides. Additionally, the Hillingdon in Bloom competition this year includes a new category of Best Rainbow Display, showing our appreciation to the NHS/Carers.

Resident Parking

The Council introduced a free emergency parking permit that residents can obtain during this time which allows them to park in the parking management scheme where they live. This reflects the higher than normal number of residents' vehicles that are being parked on residential streets. Additionally, the Council has removed charges and time limits from all Council public car parks and pay and display bays to provide additional parking capacity for residents and key workers. During this time, parking enforcement has continued, particularly on obstructive or dangerous parking that could have a significant impact on safety and access for emergency and essential services.

Rural Activity Garden Centre

Gardening encourages outdoor activity and provides mental stimulation. During the pandemic, the amazing RAGC Team have set up a delivery service where residents (Hillingdon only) can order compost & plants and pay over the phone. The team delivers the goods to their doors, with 380 orders delivered as of the 1 May.



Temporary Mortuary - Breakspear Crematorium

Mortuary and funeral services are critical during any emergency resulting in deaths. The car park and North Chapel at Breakspear Crematorium in Ruislip was identified as the best location for a temporary mortuary to support London with body storage capacity prior to funeral.

The original capacity for this temperature controlled facility was 800 but was quickly increased to 1600. The temporary facility was built and operational within 7 days on the 31st March. This incredible achievement was made possible with support from across Hillingdon service areas and contractors, such as to provide site fencing, CCTV, ICT, phones, pest control, cleaners, security, clinical waste removal, waste removal, staff welfare/catering and specialist cleaning products.



A team of staff were deployed to help with the Admin functions of the Temporary Mortuary and support the operators of the facility. This has enabled it to operate seven days a week from 8am to 11pm with two shifts of staff per day to help facilitate bodies arriving and departing.

Though other facilities have been constructed across London in readiness only Breakspear and Wanstead Flats are currently operational.

(photo courtesy of the Metro newspaper)

Registration Services

At the commencement of the lockdown, legislation was passed to allow for the registration of deaths to be undertaken by telephone. At the same time, and in accordance with the rules around essential travel only, all other registration activities (e.g. birth registration, marriage ceremonies citizenship ceremonies etc) were suspended.

Staff in the Registration team (part of Democratic Services) have been handling all the death registrations and, as of 7 May there have been 267 deaths registered, with the cause of death stated as COVID-19.

Adult and Community Learning Services

This has traditionally been a service to residents provided 'in-room' for certain courses and also online for others. Since the pandemic started, 85% of qualification courses have now adapted to run online (78 courses, 754 resident enrolments).

All non-accredited online courses scheduled to begin after Easter were offered to residents at half price. Childminding workshops are also free. 5 online workshops are scheduled to begin, free to carers, including Dance Exercise. This supports carers and prevents the need for cover when they attend classes. 10 residents doing a pilot online course in Family Learning, improving their basic skills to help them support their children's education. 30 local childminders are using the online 'Childminder Forum' daily as a method of sharing good practice and problem solving. A series of free, short videos support childminders to improve their digital skills during lockdown.

Officers advise that resident learners have been able to better control their learning at their own pace. A free online resource was created called 'Beating the Corona Boredom with videos and established on the Council's website. Officers are finding that online learning is improving digital skills of local residents and providing continuity to learners who regularly access courses to help reduce their social isolation.

For the tutors, they have identified new digital resources and incorporated these in their teaching, along with their own online training courses to enable them to deliver learning online for residents. This includes training for residents with learning disabilities.

Helping Rough Sleepers

In April, the Government announced that all rough sleepers should be accommodated in light of the public health emergency. For those around Heathrow airport, an exercise led by MHCLG and involving numerous partners including the council and voluntary sector organisations took place at the beginning of April. Following significant logistical planning, over four days from 1st April, 165 rough sleepers were health triaged, transported and placed into GLA Covid Protect hotels and accommodation arranged by Hillingdon Council. This work focused on all rough sleepers found at the airport regardless of status.

In order to support other rough sleepers in Hillingdon, the Council commissioned & opened a 33 bed rough sleeper assessment centre and hub at Olympic House in Uxbridge. This was commissioned & opened within 24 hours with the first residents moving in within 12 hours of the Government request to offer accommodation to all rough sleepers. Such was the speed of the opening that officers had to go the extra mile to ensure that the first residents were able to move in. This included bulk buying of bedding at the local Costco and escorting residents into the unit. The Council also gives thanks to the landlord Centremark who put in extra staff to prepare the unit for occupation. All rough sleepers are now also receiving a weekly food parcel and this has been organised by the Fraud Team. Additionally, meals, where necessary, have been provided with our local commissioned service Appetito. As of early May, 61 rough sleepers are now in accommodation provided by the Council. Health support to rough sleepers has been in partnership with the CCG, and is now being pushed into Olympic House. which includes mental health & general needs support.

Housing services

Housing services have remained fully open and since the 1 April, 222 residents have approached for advice. Of these 113 have used the Service's online assessment & application tool. In partnership with the Customer Contact Centre the Council have opened 3 additional

emergency phone lines for residents to be referred directly to caseworkers where necessary.

To ensure that the Council makes the best use of its housing stock, officers are using void properties on a temporary basis as accommodation for homeless families. To date 16 properties are being adapted for this use.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on tenants' household finances, so Council officers have been re-deployed and have been making proactive calls to tenants in 'high risk' groups including those subject to court orders and other repayment arrangements to offer support, guidance and to renegotiate payment arrangements. Debt management advice has been offered alongside support with making applications for Discretionary Housing Payment

and maximising welfare benefit take up. The number of cases in arrears with their rent and owing more than £500 has increased from 1,069 cases on 20 February to 1,332 as at 27 April.



For sheltered housing accommodation, a small group of Scheme Managers have continued to operate within the Council's 21 schemes to offer support and reassurance to elderly residents, many of whom are 'shielding' due to age and underlying health conditions. 'Social distancing' is being supported by greater use of telephone contact with the need to enter resident's homes being restricted to emergency situations only. Access to Schemes is being 'controlled' to limit all non-urgent movement. Access is being facilitated to critical services including care providers and service contractors in connection with gas, fire and water quality.

The Housing Repairs Service has had to make many adjustments during the pandemic to deliver urgent and emergency works with our tenant's properties and corporate buildings in line with safety guidelines. On an average day this April, around 90-100 jobs have been carried out. Regarding planned works, the team where possible are working within the Government guidelines are managing to still deliver statutory service contracts. The mobile nature of the Repairs Service has also enabled it to make an important contribution to the Council's wider response to the pandemic, outlined later in the report.

Supporting Universal Credit

The Council has seen a significant uplift in the number of tenants applying for the national Universal Credit scheme [UC] due to a fall in household income / loss of employment. The Department for Work and Pensions requires local councils to verify all UC applications made by Council tenants. The team verifies an average of 120 claims each month and applies to the DWP for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) with tenants who are in arrears or struggle to manage their finances through reasons of vulnerability. During the last week of March the team received a total of 248 UC verification requests and made 27 applications for 'APAs'. During the first three weeks of April the average number of weekly verification requests was 237 with an average of 16 APAs applied for each week. Processing these verification requests swiftly is crucial in enabling tenants to access UC in order to meet their rent and other household liabilities. In order to accommodate this significant uplift in workflow staffing

arrangements have been re-prioritised and extended successfully without any backlogs or delays presenting.

Tackling Domestic Abuse

Tackling domestic abuse has always been a key priority for Hillingdon. Like the Council, during the pandemic, the Government has placed additional focus and support on this, given the national stay at home requirements. As such, the Council has been prioritising a number of new cases of Domestic Abuse. In February 2020 there were 14 cases being managed. By the end of April 2020 this number had increased to 20.

During the UK Coronavirus lockdown our
Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline
Helpline remains open 24 hours a day.
You are not alone.

nationaldahelpline.org.uk | 0808 2000 247

Refuge
For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

Where necessary, interventions have included facilitating placements within refuges and other forms of temporary accommodation in addition to supporting individuals who are safe to remain at home with enhanced security packages and regular joint welfare checks undertaken by staff and the Police. Since the lockdown, there have been 9 referrals for sanctuary schemes.

Contingency plans are also in place in the event that a partial or full lifting of restrictions leads to a significant increase in new Domestic Abuse cases presenting.

Police data shows that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has reported that they have made 4093 arrests in London in the 6 week period to 19 April 2020. In addition, the MPS has reported an increase of 9% in DA Incidents (this is a combination of crimes and non-crimes) over the period March 9 - April 19. There have also been 2 DA murders in London (not in Hillingdon).

Local Public Health Services (*non-medical COVID-19 related*)

Whilst there have been challenges delivering services face-to-face, many local public health services have continued to operate.

Substance misuse services, provided by ARCH and SORTED have been maintaining contact with clients via the internet (phone, Zoom). These services are monitoring clients' response to the changes put in place as a result of the pandemic 'lock-down' and the learning will be used to inform delivery of the service going forward.

Due to the pandemic, sexual and reproductive health services have seen some staff redeployed into acute hospital settings. However, residents requiring a face to face consultation after a telephone triage process are signposted to a clinic in Harrow for their genito-urinary requirements. In Hillingdon, at Oaklands Medical Centre, clinical treatments are dispensed such as HIV drugs and contraception.

Core smoking cessation services and all of the Hillingdon community pharmacies are continuing to provide stop smoking services to residents. However, to follow government direction on social distancing, there are no face to face consultations. Patient interventions are conducted via telephone in pharmacies and text / phone from the core service.

NHS England has instructed all community services to stop delivering NHS Health Checks until 31st July 2020 in the first instance. Support will be provided to GP surgeries to get their NHS Health Check services up and running again as soon as it is feasible for them to do so.

Central and North West London (CNWL) NHS Trust is reporting redeployment of health visitors and school nursing to assist with the pandemic. CNWL reports they are covering birth visits, mandatory checks with vulnerable families, safeguarding, targeted work. Also, plan to send out health review questionnaires and health promotion advice to 8 month and 2 year olds which includes dietary and dental care advice.

Waste collection, recycling and street cleaning

Hillingdon has continued to deliver its **gold standard** waste collection and street cleaning services during the pandemic and this has received much praise from residents. Other councils have had to reduce their waste collection services and some, such as the London boroughs of Harrow and Richmond, suspended their green waste collections. By contrast, Hillingdon continues to operate its weekly collection services and in fact April 2020 was the highest ever month on record for collecting green waste (2278 tonnes).



During this current pandemic, waste and street cleansing have clearly had to adapt and change their working practices to be able to continue this important frontline service to residents. For example, weekly waste crews with more than two staff members in the cab have been transported in mini buses behind to maintain social distancing. This new way of operating the services has ensured the Council has maintained free weekly waste collections. Many residents have shown their appreciation of this service by clapping teams as they work, leaving messages of thanks and support pinned to bags and leaving chocolate, biscuits and perhaps the odd bottle of drink out for crews. Some of this feedback is shown later in this report.

Additionally, the street cleansing teams continue to keep our roads, pavements and town centres clean. During the pandemic, they have been operating with one driver and one operative. Residents have continued to order recycling bags via the website, which are being delivered on a daily basis.

To prioritise the maintenance of the free-to-use rubbish and recycling collections, the Council temporarily suspended its usual bulky waste collection service, but has recently re-introduced the service for a small charge to cover our service delivery costs and ensure we can meet demand. This small charge is £25 per collection; this is 40% cheaper than the average fee of

neighbouring boroughs. For residents aged over-65 and those in receipt of Personal Independence Payment, the service is free.

Following a temporary suspension, the Council will be reopening the Harefield Civic Amenity Site from Monday 11 May for Hillingdon residents and registered trade waste carriers who have a credit account with the Council.

For textile recycling, the Salvation Army has advised that they have suspended collections from textile banks in Hillingdon until further notice. However, residents can still recycle their textiles (whatever condition) by using the Council's [textile collection service](#) and putting their purple tinted sacks out on the same day as clear recycling bags.

Museums, Music and Theatres & VE Day 75

Whilst these important cultural facilities and events have been cancelled to a large degree, services have innovated by providing these through video, internet and social media.

Facebook posts have gone out daily and between them have garnered nearly 100,000 views and a [80-second tour of the Bunker](#) has received over 8,000 views.

The Council's [Dancing in the Streets Exhibition](#), originally researched as a touring exhibition, was instead placed online to help mark VE Day 75. This exhibition looked back in time and showed how residents across the Borough came out into the streets on 8 May 1945 to celebrate Victory in Europe, whilst remembering those who gave their lives during the war. The Council also promoted to residents [alternative ideas for celebration](#) which include ideas to create your own bunting, create your own 'rationing carrot cake' (a popular wartime recipe) and simple illuminations to mark the day.



The Music Service has focussed on trying to continue some services online. 600 parents have expressed an interest in beginning online lessons for the Summer Term and these have now begun, with as many teachers as possible working via this method. The Service is using Google Meets and new safeguarding procedures have been written to ensure lessons are conducted safely and appropriately.

Theatres are currently closed and the Council will review this in light of Government guidance. [The theatre website is now listing](#) online arts and community activities that residents can take part in.

Local Planning and Transportation Services

The Council has continued to run its planning service. Although application volumes have dropped to about 75% of normal April levels, nonetheless, during the month approximately 300 officer delegated planning decisions were made. A high level of public consultation undertaken

by the Council on planning applications has been maintained. The service has worked with applicants and interested parties to receive digital photographs of sites and neighbouring properties. In particular promoting use of virtual meetings has enabled a full pre-application advice service to be offered. To make decisions on the more significant applications across the Borough, the first virtual Planning Committee meeting on 7 May, with more to follow.

The Council's Building Control service has also continued to operate. Building Control is a service where a large proportion of officer work revolves around site inspections, so the pandemic presented many challenges to service delivery. With the exception of Excavations and Major Structural work, the Building Control team have accepted photographs of work they would normally inspect, thus enabling a partial service to continue. In this regard a 'same day' service to advise surveyors/builders/applicants whether photographs are acceptable or not has been implemented since the lockdown commenced.

Before the start of the pandemic the School Travel and Road Safety Team were preparing to launch a competition aimed at all pupils aged 4-18 to design their dream bike in line with National Bike Week which runs from 8th - 12th June 2020. With schools closing, Team looked at how they could still promote the competition and Road Safety and School Travel in general through social media and online learning portals. Templates were created for both Primary and Secondary schools and letters were sent out to parents from the school parent mail systems informing them about the competition. The competition commenced on 2 April. By the end of April there had been over 400 hundred entries and lots of positive feedback from parents and teachers.

Highways and Road Repairs

Even with less cars on the road due to Government guidance, essential highway and street lighting routine term service works have continued including gully cleansing, potholing, street light fault repairs and lamp night-scouting.

Major public realm enhancement schemes in Station Road Hayes and Uxbridge High Street that were already ongoing have also continued notwithstanding supply chain challenges. The Rapid Response team has continued to undertake urgent and emergency reactive works, such as potholes, and highway safety inspections have been maintained.

Community Safety and Enforcement

The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour & Environmental Enforcement Team have continued to operate 24/7 but have seen a reduction in daily calls for assistance regarding anti-social behaviour. The Team have been carrying out daily patrols across the Borough supporting the Metropolitan Police Service with the lockdown arrangements and ensuring businesses, shop-keepers and residents operate within the guidelines issued by the Government. Examples of this important work have included:

- Business advice and compliance checks on social distancing
- Enforcement on some businesses on social distancing and their operation
- Parks and open spaces patrolled and new Government powers enforced

- Night-time economy patrols, e.g. bars and clubs, in order to ensure compliance with Government instructions to remain closed
- Supporting police on joint operations and ASB issues in tower blocks
- Making essential visits on safeguarding and harassment cases
- Dealing with traveller incursions and fly tipping during lockdown
- Providing essential data to the Government on breaches/social distancing/compliance.
- Security patrolling the Council's own buildings so they are secure and safe.

Keeping residents well informed

The Council's corporate communication team have sought to keep residents locally informed about UK Government advice, how Council services are operating and importantly how to access or find out more about services to support them during the pandemic.

A new Coronavirus website section received a total of 91,382 hits between 23 March and 1 May. The most popular sections are:

- Rubbish and recycling (18,322 hits)
- Parking (13,463 hits)
- Support for business (13,001 hits)
- Support for residents self-isolating (12,338 hits)

The team has also produced a range of engaging infographics and some animations (using similar colours to create a consistent identity) on a variety of key Coronavirus topics to signpost residents and businesses to information. These have proved popular on social media.

On social media, the Council's Twitter messages (tweets) and Facebook posts were shown to 483,713 users during April alone, with nearly 24,000 interactions, including 14,540 views of our videos on Facebook. It is estimated that on Twitter, the Council's tweets during March and April (512 in total) were shown to around 631,000 users.

On printed or email communications, there has been a Hillingdon People special delivered direct to every home with important information, along with 3 email newsletters.



Technology solutions to support our operations

If the arms and legs of a person are council services, the Council's ICT Team have been their backbone! ICT have ensured that Council staff and services - and the technology and systems they rely on - have been able to operate effectively during the pandemic, with many staff working remotely at home at this time. During this pandemic, ICT have:

- Aply supported staff to be able to work from home and access Council systems securely.
- Implemented a new system called 'Helping Hands' within an extremely short time period, for the COVID-19 Hub to manage processes and support shielded residents. The system is also being utilised for H4All;
- Helped set up new contact centre and associated telephony and kit for the H4All hub and a reworking of the telephony call system to support the running of the existing Customer Contact Centre
- Supported the testing for Democratic Services virtual council meetings to start in May.
- Reconfigured the current Registrars system to facilitate telephone registration of deaths.
- Reconfigured the Library Management system in order for residents to be able to register online for library membership, access online reading resources and also research their ancestry and family history online. Previously residents had to visit a Library to do this
- Set up network, telephony and kit requirements to support the temporary mortuary at Breakspear Crematorium.

Essential corporate support

Other key corporate teams have been critical in the Council's response, particularly Finance, Legal Services and Human Resources. Whilst not front-line, staff in these areas have made a considerable effort to keep the Council's finances moving, legal support flowing and staff working 24/7 to support services

PART 2

NEW COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE DIRECTLY SUPPORTING THOSE AFFECTED BY THE PANDEMIC

In direct response to the pandemic, new community services have been created to directly support more vulnerable residents, including those being 'shielded' following NHS advice due to their underlying health conditions. The Council has also provided vital financial support in certain cases, along with implementing the UK Government's Small Business Grants

How some vulnerable residents have been affected

By calling or direct visits by front line services, Council officers have heard and seen some stark accounts of how the pandemic and lockdown restrictions are affecting the more vulnerable residents. Some anonymous examples are given below, but these are reflected across a number of contacts with the Council:

"A resident with dementia has not understood the virus and attempted to get out of the house constantly. Doors were having to be locked. Their wife was unable to take them for a walk as they tried to run away. The Council has ensured support is being provided, carers are attending, and they have been sent buddy materials, offered phone calls and other support to stay connected to people."

"A resident in a care home and struggling to understand why their wife is no longer visiting them daily. The wife is worried about whether the virus is in the care home. She is highly anxious and also very vulnerable due to her own health problems. The Council has since arranged video calls with her husband with help from the staff once a week. She has been receiving the buddy materials, calls and is on the whatsapp group to stay connected."

"One resident had no money in cash to pay for groceries and did not want to bother people for groceries. The Council reviewed the support they can provide and referred the resident to the community hub who will contact and arrange for food deliveries."

A new Community Hub

The Council set up a *Community Hub* and has been working with Hillingdon 4All (H4All) to provide a range of support to those residents unable to leave the house because they are ill, because of their caring role or if they are self-isolating due to the Coronavirus and may not have a friend, neighbour or family member available to support them. This community service has sought to offer peace of mind to residents and has been offering the following services daily:

- Emergency Food Parcels to eligible residents
- Bespoke Food Shopping
- Prescriptions - pharmacy registration and regular prescriptions delivered to homes.

- Befriending / a regular friendly telephone call for those lonely and isolated or struggling with emotions
- Information and advice on welfare and benefits during this time
- Dog walking and posting mail

The Council is providing these services for free, with the exception of bespoke food shopping, which is arranged individually with residents.

Delivering this, and operational from the Civic Centre since 30 March, Hillingdon's Community Hub has received hundreds of individual requests from such residents in the 6 weeks to 6 May, and in the majority of cases Council staff have either provided direct support to residents or made onward referrals to Hillingdon for All (H4All) and associated charities.



The Community Hub has been operating 7 days per week, from 8am – 5.30pm (Monday to Friday) and 10am – 2pm on weekends and bank holidays and takes calls from residents requesting support, and makes outbound calls to residents designated as 'shielded'.

In general, the majority of calls from residents have related to requests for food and shopping, and/or assistance with the collection and delivery of prescription medication. Other common areas for support have included interest in dog-walking services, befriending or posting mail requests. To achieve this, 78 Council staff have been redeployed as part of the Community Hub and 35 for the Food Delivery Team. They are drawn from the following service areas:

Service Area	Staff	Role
Democratic Services	2	Hub Co-ordination
Human Resources	2	Hub Management
Provider & Commissioned Care	1	Hub Management
Libraries	57	Call Handling Operatives
Museums and Performing Arts	17	Call Handling
Golf Service	1	Call Handling
Business Assurance	35	Food Delivery Team
TOTAL	113	

Between 30 March and 6 May the Community Hub had received 5314 inbound calls:

Day of Week	Calls offered
Monday	1077
Tuesday	1087
Wednesday	1013
Thursday	1083
Friday	704
Saturday	245
Sunday	105
TOTAL	5314

Requests for support received into the Community Hub for food and medication collection are passed onto the Council's Food Delivery Team, especially created during this emergency. The requests below are then either actioned by Council staff or passed on to H4All:

Support Request Type	Number of Requests (to 6 May)
Bespoke Food Shopping	1037
Emergency Food Parcel	376
Medication Collection/Delivery	290
TOTAL	1703

Of which, redeployed Hillingdon Council staff have directly delivered:

Support Request Type	Number of Requests (to 6 May)
Bespoke Food Shopping	1018
Emergency Food Parcel	142
Medication Collection/Delivery	53
TOTAL	1213

Food Delivery Team

Co-ordinated by the Council's Business Assurance Team, a Food Delivery Team has been established comprising 35 staff. As part of this new service, the Council has set up partnerships with the 3 major **Sainsbury's** supermarkets in the Borough, and Boots in Uxbridge, which allow Council officers priority shopping for vulnerable residents. The Council also buys in bulk from Uxbridge Sainsbury's.

These Council staff have been delivering Emergency Food Parcels. The parcels include essential non-perishable supplies, such as pasta, cereal, fruit, tea bags, potatoes, tinned goods and toilet paper. The contents are more comprehensive than that of the UK Government Food boxes and have been adapted to reflect box types for different households, e.g. single person, family of two etc....



As of 3 May, the total number of people (shielded and unshielded) that were being supported with emergency food parcels was 2,957, though many will be for more than 1 person in a household. In addition, the Council has been providing emergency food parcels to rough sleepers homeless in hostels for the last three weeks (including some out-of-borough to Slough, Southall and Harrow).

For the new bespoke food shopping service (non-emergency), Council staff drive to and visit local supermarkets to collect the goods requested. Many residents shopping will have seen these critical Council workers speeding down the aisle of local supermarkets. As at 3 May, the total number of bespoke personal shopping deliveries made by Council staff was 936 but a significant proportion of these deliveries were for more than 1 person in the household.

The Council has received lots of positive feedback from residents and gifts and donations for the Mayor's Charity. Neighbouring London authorities have also asked for more information about the bespoke food delivery service, and wish to develop a similar one.

If you are reading this report online and would like to use the services provided by the Community Hub and Food Delivery Services please email:
COVID19Hub@hillington.gov.uk

Or please call 020 3949 5786 from 8am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday (10am to 2pm weekends and bank holidays).

More details are on our website here: <https://hillington.gov.uk/community-support>

‘Helping Hands’ system

To help the Community Hub co-ordinate its work, a new CRM system called Helping Hands was implemented and went live in mid-April. The system is a single repository of data for all residents requesting or are required support as a result of Coronavirus, and includes statutory client questionnaire data and a needs assessment. The system allows Council staff to make internal referrals from other areas where they contact residents, e.g. Social Care and also external referrals such as to H4All, e.g. for safeguarding.

NHS ‘shielded’ lists

As of 6 May, a total of 7,701* residents listed as ‘shielded’ have been contacted by Social Care and the Community Hub, with able assistance provided by Technical Administration Teams when required. Daily lists, including residents to be contacted, continue to be received from the NHS and uploaded directly into the CRM system. These new additional names provided daily are prioritised calls for the Community Hub.



* It is anticipated that this figure will double.

Supporting safeguarding

If during contact with a resident a safeguarding concern is raised, a Social Worker is present in the Community Hub for all shifts to provide support and expertise to call handlers. In those situations where a referral to Social Care is required a referral is made within the Helping Hands CRM system. As of 6 May, a total of 86 social care referrals from the Community Hub have been made because of concerns for a resident’s safety or wellbeing. Also, 500 cases have been referred to Social Care for welfare checks because the Community Hub were unable to make contact with the resident.

Ensuring key workers are tested

The Council facilitated a COVID-19 Mobile Testing Unit at the Ruislip Manor’s Linden Avenue Car Park on Thursday 30 April and Friday 1 May. The facility was operated by the British Royal Army and over the two days had tested circa. 500 Council and social care critical workers. This was extremely successful as both days were fully booked. It is anticipated that the facility will return regularly to Hillingdon to ensure continuous testing facilities are available within the Borough.

New financial assistance to residents

A Hardship Fund has been agreed by the Leader of the Council, with most of this mandated to go on a £150 reduction to all existing and new Council Tax Reduction Scheme cases. However, some will go on discretionary support to other Council Tax cases linked to Coronavirus hardship.

Support to businesses and local economy

The UK Government has set out a substantial package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support employees, employers and businesses through this period of disruption caused by the Coronavirus. The Council has worked with the Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce and Uxbridge BID to ensure businesses in the Borough are aware of these measures and also the financial support available to help them. This vital information is also available and updated on the Council's website and includes:

- [Help for local businesses](#)
- [Statutory Sick Pay](#)
- [Business rates relief](#)
- [Business support grants](#)
- [Business cash flow issues](#)
- [Large business cash flow issues](#)
- [Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#)
- [Assistance for the self-employed](#)
- [Pubs and restaurants](#)
- [Contracting your services to large or medium sized organisations outside of the public sector](#)
- [Business Insurance](#)
- [Support for businesses through deferring VAT and Income Tax payments](#)
- [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#)
- [COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility](#)
- [Support for businesses paying tax: Time to Pay service](#)
- [Support for arts, culture, creative industries](#)

The Council has received circa. £46m of Government grant to support local small businesses, by way of a business support grant. At the end of April circa. 2,100 grants had been paid out with a total value of nearly £30m. The Council has also been applying the extended business rate relief to qualifying businesses rates accounts worth circa. £70m at this time.



PART 3

EMERGENCY DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council, [Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE](#), has been very active in making all the key decisions required by Hillingdon Council during the pandemic. Whilst many daily decisions taken are on service operational matters, some are more significant in nature, in which case they are made through use of the Leader's Emergency Power for instant decision-making. These are set out below for formal ratification by the Cabinet and due democratic public record.

Leader's Emergency Power / Reasons for Decision	Date of decision
Approval of essential changes to the Council's contractual arrangements during the Pandemic, including the implementation of HM Government's COVID-19 Procurement Policy Note issued on 20 March 2020.	6 April 2020
Accepted a £6.86m social care grant from HM Government and agreed an immediate spend of £1.87m of this grant to support our Social Care providers in maintaining resilience over the coming months.	7 April 2020
Agreed a 10% temporary uplift to permanent front-line social care staff salaries amounting to £197k revenue to reflect their critical role.	7 April 2020
Agreed up to £50k external grant funding for H4All to support the local voluntary sector response.	7 April 2020
Released £49k of capital funding for urgent works to secure the Hillingdon Sports and Leisure Centre site following its temporary closure.	7 April 2020
Approval of new £25 fee per collection for the Special/Bulky Waste Collections Service to cover service delivery costs and meet demand and no charge for residents aged over-65 and those in receipt of Personal Independence Payment.	17 April 2020
Agreement to waive the parental fees at Early Years Centres for those unable to send their children to them for the period that the Early Years Centres remain closed.	20 April 2020
Approval of a Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund Policy following receipt of Government Funding of £2.12m to reduce council tax liability in 2020/21 by £150 for all working age claimants in receipt of council tax reduction, with remaining funds for a discretionary hardship fund.	22 April 2020

Alternative options considered by the Leader were limited in light of the Pandemic and based on briefings from Council officers. Any further Emergency Decisions made will be reported to a subsequent Cabinet meeting.

PART 4

WORKING TOGETHER, MOVING TO BETTER TIMES AHEAD

This report highlights how Council staff, contractors, Police, NHS, charities, H4All and others in the communities have all come together at this time to put residents first and protect lives.

Council services have also aligned on an unprecedented effort. For example, the Housing Repairs Team has been able to assist Waste Services with the delivery of recycling bags over weekends, have assisted with vehicles and staff to support the Food Delivery Team and distributed a large critical supply of PPE for social care providers.

With staff across various services being redeployed to work directly on the community hub, temporary mortuary and other front-line services, staff remaining within service have adapted them or innovatively transitioned them online for residents' learning, participation or enjoyment.

As the Council looks forward, residents should be aware that the re-opening of its popular facilities and resumption of events will be largely dictated by UK Government advice. However, in the meantime key services will continue for residents, even if accessed in a different way.

Across London, Hillingdon has made a substantial contribution to the overall London resilience effort and the role of the Chief Executive and the Council's Corporate Management Team and expanded GOLD arrangements in Hillingdon have ensured responsive management and coordination of the Council's endeavours aligned with the wider work across the Capital.

A comprehensive recovery plan is being developed for agreement by the Leader of the Council to resume and operate services in a safe and co-ordinated way to meet any new norms. Additionally, with many staff working from home, both business continuity arrangements and creative service innovations have had to be rapidly deployed in light of the pandemic. The lessons of this will provide important operational and transformational discoveries that Hillingdon Council will wish to consider for the future, to continue its first class services to residents.

The Council's clear mission throughout this pandemic has been to continue to provide key services & support residents, moving together to better times ahead.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

The overall financial impact of Coronavirus on Hillingdon is difficult to estimate as it will depend on how long the current lockdown arrangements are in place, how long the recovery period lasts and what the new normal looks like. The impact will also depend on whether the full costs of Coronavirus are recovered in full from central Government or whether it expects some of the cost to be borne by councils. The gross cost based on an assumed 3 months lockdown followed by a 3 month recovery period for a Council the size of Hillingdon is currently estimated to be around £30m, although is subject to much uncertainty.

The gross cost is made up of two elements - lost or reduced income and specific expenditure pressures. The income pressures are probably going to be greater in magnitude than the specific expenditure costs. There is likely to be a significant impact on NNDR (business rate) collection. The collection rate for April 20 was about 35% lower than April 19 on a like for like basis. However, it is not yet known how much of this will be a delay in payment rather than non-payment resulting in a bad debt. Bad debts are more likely to be a problem with NNDR than Council Tax as businesses are likely to fail during the current crisis. Hillingdon is also particularly impacted by the position of businesses paying rates at Heathrow as the aviation sector is particularly adversely impacted by Coronavirus. However, the impact on Hillingdon financially is also affected by how the relative collection of rates around London feed through the London Rating Pool. Further modelling in this respect is being undertaken by London Councils.

On the Council Tax side there is expected to be an increase by residents of 20% in Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) claims during the year and a lower overall collection rate. It is estimated that Council Tax collection rates could fall from circa. 99% to circa. 96%.

There is also a significant loss of income from fees and charges, particularly parking charges, income from Leisure centres via the operator's management fee, planning fees income, Heathrow imported food income, trade waste income and commercial rents.

On the expenditure side the Council has agreed a support package for key providers of day care and bed based services. This includes a 10% uplift in contractual payments for a period of 3 months, payment in advance each month on plan rather than in arrears and an initial agreement to supply and pay for PPE. PPE costs for Hillingdon (both Council and private sector providers we are supplying on behalf of) bought through the West London Alliance Consortium was £534k just for the month of April. Significant costs are also being incurred on the waste collection and disposal front due to increased volumes of domestic waste. Specific costs are also being incurred on the temporary mortuary at Breakspear and in housing rough sleepers in the Borough during the crisis. The Council is planning to spend £2.1m through the Hardship Fund on Council Tax support through a £150 discount for residents in receipt of CTRS and up to £150 discount for other Council Tax payers in financial difficulty as well as up to £100k on food costs for vulnerable residents.

On the funding side the Government have agreed two tranches of COVID-19 grants which, for Hillingdon, total £15.2m and £2.1m for our Hardship Fund. This is still somewhat short of what we currently expect total costs to be i.e. c£30m. However, there is still time for this funding to be agreed as the Government are still in the process of understanding the costs councils are incurring through the monthly returns we are required to return to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (so far one of these has been completed and the second is in progress).

The task of trying to balance the budget in 2020/21 will probably be greater than in any year. However, significant work has already been undertaken on this front - decisions are being taken under the Leader of the Council and Corporate Director of Finance's delegated powers as part of the work on the outturn for 2019/20 to improve the financial resilience of the Council going into 2020/21. This includes switching funding from revenue to capital where possible to increase revenue reserves. This work will continue during the 2020/21 financial year as part of the budget monitoring process. As a result of this work the Council has unallocated reserves going into the current financial year of c£37.5m which is £3.3m higher than assumed at Council Tax setting in February 2020. These unallocated reserves are significantly higher than those for neighbouring boroughs. The Council also has significant Public Health and other earmarked reserves at the end of March 2020 that can also be utilised for Coronavirus, if necessary.

Going forward there is likely to be a significant impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast arising from Coronavirus. The Council already had a savings target for 2021/22 in the region of £10m pre-Coronavirus and the financial impact on the Council is likely to last well past the current financial year. The UK Government has deferred both the national move to a new rates retention system and the Fair Funding review, both previously scheduled for 2021/22, but it has not made any comment with regards specific funding for local authorities past the current financial year.

Legal

The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent and became law in the UK on 25 March 2020. It provides the legal basis for the current lockdown of citizens and businesses but it does a lot more besides. For example, the Act provides for new emergency powers to defeat Coronavirus, support public services and the economy and it also gives enforcement powers to the police to enforce the new social distancing rules laid down by the Government. There is a focus on Local Government in the Act which is supplemented by Regulations and written Government Advice.

Whilst the Council is of course aware of this new legislation and Advice, it is, as is evidenced in this report, doing far more than it is required and expected to do to protect and support residents and businesses in the Borough.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Hillingdon Council - Coronavirus Updates](#)
- [UK Government Advice - GOV.UK](#)
- [Coronavirus Act 2020](#)

APPENDIX A - EXTRACT OF RESIDENT FEEDBACK

The Council has received hundreds of compliments from residents thanking staff for continuing to deliver essential services and support to them during the Coronavirus pandemic. Below is a small selection of some of the nice things residents have said. We thank them for their compliments...

Local business owners - "Thank you so much for processing my claim - you have saved my business and its staff. If there is anything we can do car related when we return to work, please feel free to contact me. Once again, thank you and stay safe and well."..... and "Thank you for supporting local businesses in these times of uncertainty. I don't think the London local authorities are getting the credit they deserve."

Residents receiving social care - "I am writing to you and the reablement team for the exceptional care that you have given me in the home, the service is professional and the carers are heroes providing care in these unprecedented times of Coronavirus, I am proud and grateful that Hillingdon is tops out of most Boroughs and I am proud to be a resident of Hillingdon."..... "Thank you to the lovely social worker who called me on Friday afternoon and kindly checked up that I was doing ok in my self isolation and asked if there was anything I needed."..... and "Got a call from my borough asking me if there was anything I needed whilst I was at home with a number to call if I needed anything. Hillingdon, a very appreciated touch."

Developers and applicants - "The virtual committee worked really well and was slicker than anticipated"..... and "That Committee went really well tonight. Impressed."

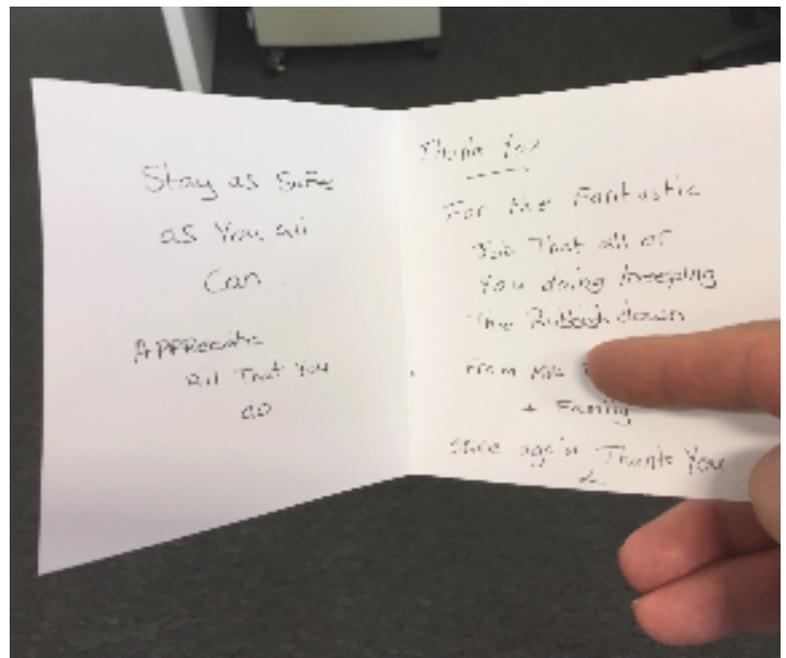
Online participants - "May I sincerely express my gratitude for setting up such an excellent competition for the children across the borough! Our children need to dream. Dream big! Dreaming about the authentic bike is even better! It's been an amazing time for my child while creating his dream bike. My boy has really showed a great passion for every detail he made on his piece of drawing. It was a pleasure for me as a parent watching him and, surely, taking hundreds of pictures of every single add on my son has been doing, step by step. Once again, thanks for inviting all local children taking up on a challenge and expressing their fantasies."

Informed residents - "Just to make you aware that Hillingdon Council have been great in how they have kept everyone informed in these tough times and all guidelines are on their website."and "I would like to compliment the Hillingdon People team and also Hillingdon Council. We have just received our copy of Hillingdon People. This copy covers all manners of things in relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic that we are all living through. Well done to the Hillingdon People team. I consider myself very lucky to live within the London Borough of Hillingdon and for a council that cares so much for its residents. Please keep up the excellent work."

Park lovers - "Keep up the super work. Our green spaces are more valuable than ever." , "I just wanted to thank the refuse workers and park/open spaces workers who keep the open spaces looking so nice. I'm amazed that with everything that's happened there has been no disruption to any of these services. I live alone in a flat so when I go out for my one hour exercise it really keeps my spirits up being able to have access to freshly mowed and well cared for open spaces." and "So impressed with Hillingdon green spaces - every new footpath I have explored on my exercise ration has led to a delightful green discovery."

Pleased tenants - "I just wanted to write and thank you for helping me so much when you had to relocate me urgently. As you know, I suffer from chronic mental health issues and mobility issues and was terrified about having to move so quickly with corona happening. You were extremely helpful and supportive and even after I moved in you assisted me with my worries about some things. You were professional but very empathetic and understanding. I am so grateful to be where I am and really hope I can stay here a long time." and "Thank you to the lovely volunteers who delivered my huge bags of medication from the chemist yesterday tea time. Observing the strict protocol carefully. Made me feel safe. Excellent job!"

Happy recyclers - "Will take this opportunity to thank all the crews as they have always carried out such a great service. To continue to do so under the current difficult situation is amazing."..... "Thank you. Your refuse and recycling services are incredible, and the efforts of your teams are much appreciated, especially now."....."Our heartfelt thanks to all the crews who help to keep our homes and streets free of rubbish. They're doing an amazing job."....."Thank you so much for your call, that is so lovely. I think the council is great. I've been going out and waving to the bin men too!".....and "Great to see Hillingdon is keeping services like rubbish collection going. Makes it feel almost normal. We are very lucky to live in Hillingdon. Your call has cheered me up this morning."



Older residents - "I think we have the best council around for the way they look after their older residents. Thank you so much for calling me back it makes so much difference knowing someone is thinking of you."....."I would highly praise the efforts made by Hillingdon council in relation to keeping in touch, it makes me feel secure and cared about"..... "I look forward to speaking to you in person when we get out again. It's nice to hear a friendly voice"....."Really good that the council is phoning. Very worried as it's very serious. Missing the dancing and activities"....."Thank you for sorting out my groceries".....and "I'm very grateful my prescription was delivered"

Residents with mental health needs - "Received the Buddy pack last week and another this morning. Found it interesting and enjoyed doing the hokey cokey exercises - they were fun. It's nice to hear another voice, I get lonely. Thank you for making me laugh." "Loved the video call, brilliant to be able to speak to everyone-this really cheered me up--so kind of you to ring" "Thank you this means so much. This is the first time that X has sang since the lockdown started. The WhatsApp group is a great way of staying in touch."

Book readers - "Receiving these books is like a lifeline, the library are unsung heroes"....."Thank you very much,I don't know what I would do without a book now"....."Thanks so much my 2 year old loved this. We usually do Rhymetime at Manor Farm library and she's really missing it at the moment! Thanks again".....and "Thank you Hillingdon Libraries for this excellent activity. My Y6 daughter really enjoyed it."

Resident generally - "I would just like to thank you all for your excellent services during this difficult time. I do think that we are so fortunate to live in Hillingdon. The council are committed to putting their residents first."....."We would like to thank the efficiency of the borough and staff as they have carried on with essential during this lockdown crisis. Many thanks.".....and "I would like to say a big thank you to all the employees who are still working and providing a great service to all the residents. I am proud to live in Hillingdon and want to make sure this council gets the praise it deserves for all the wonderful things we are privileged to carry on receiving - from rubbish collections to open parks. Thank you all very much."