



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

An Extraordinary Meeting of the **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held virtually on **TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020** AT **7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage'.

Susan Parsonage  
Chief Executive  
Published on 14 September 2020

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide independent “critical friend” challenge and to work with the Council’s Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. The Committee considers submissions from a range of sources and reaches conclusions based on the weight of evidence – not on party political grounds.

This meeting may be filmed for inclusion on the Council’s website.

Note: The Council has made arrangements under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to hold this meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams. The meeting can be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/HbJgRxjkVj4>

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# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Our Vision

*A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business*

### Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

### Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

### A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

### Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

### Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

### Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Councillors

Guy Grandison (Chairman)	Oliver Whittle (Vice-Chairman)	Keith Baker
Shirley Boyt	Paul Fishwick	Graham Howe
Clive Jones	Abdul Loyes	

### Substitutes

Andy Croy	Carl Doran	Pauline Helliar-Symons
Emma Hobbs	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Caroline Smith

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
28.		<p><b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
29.		<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest.</p>	
30.		<p><b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any public questions relating to items on this agenda.</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this committee.</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions">www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</a></p>	
31.		<p><b>MEMBER QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any member questions relating to items on this agenda.</p>	
32.	None Specific	<p><b>PROPERTY INVESTMENT GROUP - COVID 19 IMPACT</b> To consider an update on the Property Investment Group, specifically relating to the impact relating to the Covid-19 pandemic (20 mins)</p>	5 - 14

<b>33.</b>	None Specific	<b>COVID-19 RESPONSE - STAFF REDEPLOYMENT</b> To consider a report on the Council's staff redeployment response to the Covid-19 pandemic <i>(20 mins)</i>	<b>15 - 24</b>
<b>34.</b>	None Specific	<b>COVID-19 - COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT RESPONSE</b> To consider a report on the Communications & Engagement response to the Covid-19 pandemic <i>(20 mins)</i>	<b>25 - 32</b>
<b>35.</b>	None Specific	<b>COVID-19 RESPONSE - COMMUNITY SAFETY</b> To consider a report on the Council's Community Safety response to the Covid-19 pandemic <i>(50 mins)</i>	<b>33 - 40</b>
<b>36.</b>	None Specific	<b>COVID 19 - COMMUNITY RESPONSE</b> To consider a report outlining the Council's Community Response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including partner and locality working <i>(50 mins)</i>	<b>41 - 66</b>
<b>37.</b>	None Specific	<b>SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO THE COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF THE INITIAL COVID-19 RESPONSE</b> To formulate the Committee's thoughts on discussions relating to the Council's initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic <i>(30 mins)</i>	

**Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent**

A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading

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# Agenda Item 32.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Property Investment Group - Covid 19 impact</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

A positive net income stream to fund Council services provided to the community.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee considers the impact of Covid 19 pandemic on the Council's commercial property investment fund.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

### **Terms of Reference:**

This report has been requested by Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration at their meeting on Tuesday evening 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

Please note the Committee considered a detailed report on the Council's Property Investment Fund and the work of the Property Investment Group at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Members are referred to this report for a full explanation of the Council's property investment strategy, procedures and activities.

This report addresses three specific aspects of the impact of Covid 19 on the Council's investment programme:

- a) What impact has Covid 19 had on investment markets?
- b) Has the investment strategy changed as a result of Covid 19?
- c) Has the Council's investment risk changed as a result of Covid 19?

## **Background:**

### **WBC Investment Strategy:**

The starting point for the Council's property investment activity is the Investment Strategy which was approved by Executive on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept 2017.

Implementation of the Strategy was delegated to the Director of Corporate Services. The director makes all investment decisions in consultation with three Executive Members supported by the Property Investment Group ("PIG"). This group comprises specialist officers and members who provide advice to the Director when making investment decisions.

The Investment Strategy explains the Council's approach to building a balanced investment portfolio for income return using both debt and cash funding to acquire assets in and out of borough. This was fully explained in the report to the Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

The commercial investment fund represents about half of the Council's overall property business. Historically the Council's property exposure had been relatively modest compared to many other local authorities but it has grown significantly in the last 5 years through delivery of our Regeneration and Commercialisation agendas.

The Commercial Property Team is currently responsible for managing approximately £8.0m p.a. rental income split across the three key portfolios Regeneration, Operational and Investment.

### **Covid 19 Pandemic:**

The Covid 19 pandemic began in December 2019 and spread through many parts of Europe by February 2020 causing disruption to international business and travel. The virus took hold in the UK in early March and by the date of the Budget on 11<sup>th</sup> March was considered to be a serious and imminent risk to the NHS and the Economy.

In response the Chancellor introduced in the budget the first of a range of special financial measures (£300bn+). The Prime Minister declared a National Emergency on 23<sup>rd</sup> March closing down society and much of the economy ("lockdown") except for key workers and essential services.

The Government quickly introduced many measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and the economic shock. Key methods of controlling transmission include limits on social gatherings, 2 meter social distancing, self-isolation, travel quarantine and the NHS "track and trace" system. All business and educational premises remain subject to significant constraints to create safe working environments.

The initial 3 month nationwide lockdown was gradually eased from June onwards in response to the end of the initial spike in infections and deaths. However, most sectors of the economy remain affected by ongoing transmission control measures. Some sectors have been unable to return to business other than in extremely limited ways, principally the arts, sports, travel and leisure sectors.

The international search for a vaccine to fully control the disease continues but the government has been unable to announce when a vaccine will be available. The current expectation is during 2021.

## **Analysis of Issues**

### **1) What impact has Covid 19 had on investment markets?**

From WBC's perspective the impact across investment markets has not justified any change in choice of investment vehicle.

Commercial property remains the only suitable asset class in which WBC could invest to satisfy the Investment Strategy and to achieve a suitable income return and balance of risk and reward. Investment in commercial property allows the Council to spread risk across a range of assets yielding contractual levels of income in excess of the cost of borrowing and management costs.

The equities markets have seen unprecedented reductions or cancellations of dividend returns even within the FTSE 100 (e.g. Shell, BT, house builders, banks, insurers). Government securities and cash deposits are now yielding almost no return and way below the cost of borrowing.

Whilst the Pandemic has had an immediate impact across property markets this has not caused the Council to deviate from its commitment to the fundamentals of the Investment Strategy. The response of the property market to the pandemic has created a wide range of challenges as well as opportunities which continue to evolve. These are carefully considered and managed by the Property Investment Group supported by our professional advisors.

In general terms the reaction of the UK property investment market to the Covid pandemic has involved three phases:

**Shock** – initial reaction leading to cessation of non-essential capital activity leading to lack of pricing evidence. Both sellers and buyers in most non-resilient market sectors withdrew to wait and see what would happen. This did not directly result in price reductions but caused price uncertainty. This uncertainty subsequently had a depressing effect on prices for sellers who were compelled to sell.

The timing of this uncertainty coincided with year-end valuations for many investment funds (including WBC). To support the valuation profession at this critical moment the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ("RICS") advised valuers to qualify nearly all valuations with a "material uncertainty" qualification relating to the lack of available market evidence on which to base a current opinion of value. The RICS has cancelled this advice across most sectors as lockdown has lifted.

This valuation qualification had the effect of slightly depressing market valuations if only because of the valuers instinct to err on the side of caution.

**Adjustment** – after several months of inactivity the market has moved into a phase of adjustment. Investors have been revising their plans where performance is perceived to be either undermined or enhanced by the impact of the pandemic.

It is not the purpose of this report to explain in any detail the behaviours of the many sectors of the market. But it is important to understand that the market comprises a complex range of stakeholders active in a wide spread of sectors and regions all of which have reacted in different ways to the pandemic. What becomes a challenge for one player frequently translates into an opportunity for another. This dynamic has been crucial to the recovery of the markets in previous cycles.

Generally speaking active investors have pursued the usual flight to quality in search of resilient tenant businesses occupying prime properties let on high quality leases such as the big four supermarkets. Investors do not necessarily require long fixed term leases but are equally attracted to properties let to strong business that typically occupy under short but repeat leases such as the logistics sector.

Increased demand for these safe sectors has inevitably resulted in positive pricing sentiment and therefore enhanced liquidity. This is a benefit to WBC because our portfolio includes a healthy spread of assets including logistics and food store properties let on long leases to top quality tenant covenants.

Conversely property sectors that have been hit hard by Covid consumer behaviour have had to cope with falling demand in both the occupational and investment markets. Notably this includes high street retail and especially shopping centres which have increasingly relied upon leisure attractions to drive footfall (e.g. Intu malls).

Distressed retail and hospitality businesses hit hard by lockdown have threatened or employed Administration or Company Voluntary Arrangements (“CVA’s”) to avoid debts and to divest onerous leases to the disadvantage of many landlords. Companies in this category include many well known names such as M & Co, T M Lewin, Monsoon Accessorize, Oasis, Warehouse, Debenhams, Kath Kidston, Laura Ashley, Pizza Express, New Look, Jigsaw, Yo Sushi, Travelodge, Zizzi, Frankie and Benny’s, Carluccio’s, Prezzo etc.

This is a market sector that the WBC investment fund has deliberately avoided and so it is sheltered from this particular risk.

**Recovery** – recovery will depend upon the balance between continued suppression of the virus and the loosening of lockdown to enable economic activity to increase again. Lasting recovery is unlikely until a vaccine has been widely implemented or at least until the UK government can commit to a timetable for a vaccination programme.

The government is struggling to balance these conflicting priorities without risking a second outbreak. For example the government says it aims to encourage 80% of civil servants back to their normal work places by end October as part of an initiative to stimulate central business districts. At the same time it is re-introducing limits on social gatherings to a maximum of 6 people in response to increasing transmission rates amongst young adults.

Recovery in all aspects of life is being discussed in terms of the “new normal” as opposed to pre Covid normal. This is likely to be true for the property market too. For example there is much speculation about the lasting impact on the office sector of the Covid imposed work from home expedient. Again, it is not the purpose of this report to analyse any particular market sector but simply to note that the temporary disruption to

the office market has created challenges as well as opportunities. WBC is alert to them and reacting accordingly supported by our professional advisers.

The new normal will not involve a change in the way the property market works but in the way it prices and responds to different asset classes and any lasting changes to their risk profiles. Pricing for core well located assets remains robust with a rapid increase in activity levels since June.

## **2) Has the investment strategy changed as a result of Covid 19?**

No, the strategy remains the same. The impact of Covid requires no deviation from our established focus on the fundamentals of sound property investment based on:

- Careful selection of resilient buildings and locations
- Length and quality of income stream
- Strength of tenant covenant/commitment
- Prospects for tenant renewal/replacement
- Alternative asset strategies to underpin capital value
- In borough opportunities to deliver multiple policy objectives

The application of these criteria to future stock selection requires, as ever, a continuing understanding of both the occupational and investment markets and pricing trends. PIG maintains this market understanding via internal specialist officers supported by external advisors who are retained to focus on each specific investment target.

Since the onset of Covid the market has progressed through the Shock and Adjustment phases of the market cycle and this has seen the usual flight to quality. WBC has built its investment portfolio on a number of early key purchases of high quality institutional calibre stock well let to strong covenants. These are the type of high quality low risk/return assets that are currently in high demand and which WBC has focused on during the pandemic.

For example, the Council has very recently acquired a small property in Twyford which meets many of these criteria. It is a mixed use high street block predominantly let to Tesco Express. The property has many positive investment features underpinned by low site cover and alternative development angles. Most importantly it adjoins the Council's existing ownership of the Waitrose in Twyford. The two sites combine to afford the Council much greater flexibility for the potential long term redevelopment or regeneration of the town centre. So this purchase was both prudent in investment terms and also strategic in terms of long term site assembly.

This class of asset helps WBC to counterbalance the higher risk/reward assets that the Council has acquired in pursuit of in borough alternative policy objectives, such as the Denmark Street Car Park estate.

In terms of WBC's efforts to continuing to increase the size of the investment portfolio it remains flexible in approach, looking to take advantage of suitable opportunities as they arise without compulsion to invest in adverse market conditions. However, as all our investment acquisitions are income enhancing it remains desirable for WBC to seek to fully invest at least the initial £100m fund where it can be done safely in compliance with the strategy.

PIG constantly monitors new investment opportunities and typically has several under review at any time. Work in progress at the onset of Covid has been subject to specific re-evaluation and most cases have been delayed or revised.

### **3) Has the Council's investment risk changed as a result of Covid 19?**

The consequences of Covid on the market has brought about a temporary and evolving change in a range of risks that could affect the Council's investment fund. These risks fall into two very broad categories:

- **Capital** – including the sale, purchase and value of assets and stakeholder behaviour
- **Revenue** - including the management of income, tenants and rental value of individual premises

#### **Capital:**

At the onset of the pandemic the Council was not committed to any new purchases and therefore was not “caught out” by the sudden impact of Covid.

The only acquisition completed during the pandemic (Twyford, see above) was conceived, priced, negotiated and contracted based on a careful consideration of the Covid environment and related risks and necessary mitigations.

The Council's property fund is still relatively new and PIG is not yet contemplating any proactive sales, so market uncertainty remains a very low risk from that point of view.

Like most local authority investors WBC retains a competitive advantage in the debt driven real estate markets because of privileged access to cheap flexible debt via the Public Works Loan Board (“PWLB”). This is not the only or necessarily preferred source of funding for WBC but it provides long term cheap debt unencumbered by the significant risks of normal private sector banking covenants (e.g. loan to value limits, income/interest margins, fixed expiry dates).

In the event of sudden economic shock it is often the banking covenants rather than the interest cost of debt that precipitates the collapse of highly geared property ventures. This is an area of risk that the Council is not exposed to when borrowing so flexibly from the PWLB. This is a very significant mitigating factor when assessing the risk of the Councils property related debt.

Due to this funding advantage the Council's property fund is unlikely to face a liquidity crisis and so there is no prospect of forced sales into an uncertain or depressed market. However it is worth noting that if the Council needed to raise funds it would be well placed to sell one or more of its high quality assets at premium value. This is because of the market “flight to quality” instinct which increases demand for institutional quality assets in an unstable market when institutions are least likely to sell them.

At the onset of Covid the investment market suffered an initial period of uncertainty and inactivity from March to July which affected opinions of value at the critical year end period. This uncertainty was created by a lack of transactions and therefore a lack of pricing evidence. It did not reflect a de facto fall in value. WBC's valuation at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 was on a par with the previous year.

Even before the pandemic there have been many reports of significant falls in the value of local authority investment assets. Needless to say they tend to focus on the more spectacular falls which have usually related to local authorities buying failing local shopping malls for proactive regeneration.

For example Shropshire County Council purchased three shopping centres for £52m at the peak of the local authority buying bubble in January 2018. A year later they had been down valued to £40m and by end 2019/20 they were valued at just under £20m. Canterbury City Council paid £154m in two phases 2016-2018 to acquire a local shopping centre for regeneration but lost £47m in down valuations by end of 2019-20.

The scale and focus of WBC's investment fund is very different. This is because the Investment Strategy was designed to avoid this sort of spending and potential valuation adjustments.

In the longer term capital risk will be reduced significantly as the market stabilises and the new normal for each sector is priced into expectations. This stage will free up the market to normal levels of activity increasing turnover and therefore confidence and price stability.

Overall WBC investment fund exposure to **capital risk** is very low because:

- it is neither contemplating nor compelled to sell any assets
- it holds stock principally for income rather than short term capital gain
- it has access to flexible and unsecured debt
- debt is comfortably serviced by long term rental income
- rental income is secured from a range of strong tenants and long leases.

#### **Revenue:**

This is the principal reason why WBC invests in property and therefore it is the most important area of risk. But these risks are more temporary in nature and evolving fairly quickly in response to the management of the pandemic.

In simple terms rent is the price an occupier is prepared to pay to occupy property and so it is very sensitive to business sentiment. It is vulnerable to short term market shock such as Covid 19. But tenants do not normally have an opportunity to adjust rent during the course of a lease other than in an upwards only direction at fixed intervals (with the notable exception of "turnover" rents).

This means that WBC's tenants remain locked into specific rent payment obligations regardless of changing circumstances and are obliged to pay the same level of rent regardless of the impact of Covid 19. This means that so long as our tenants continue to trade profitably then they will pay the same level of rent and the Council will be unaffected.

It is only at lease expiry that a tenant can choose to relocate or agree new terms with their existing landlord. Therefore so long as WBC's leases do not all expire at the same time in the middle of the pandemic (when tenant take up might be temporarily suppressed) the risk of a significant decline in income will be avoided.

WBC's investment fund includes a wide range of properties and tenants with lease expiry dates well spread out over the short and long term. Approximately 60% of the

fund's income is secured on leases with unexpired terms of at least 10 years. This provides a high level of risk protection.

The key risk to a property investor in a time of economic shock is not so much a temporary decline in rental value but the ability of tenants to continue to afford to pay rent. Economic shock is often the final catalyst for tenant failure in sectors that were already under pressure. The Pandemic has added significantly to the pressure on high street retailers and the struggling casual dining sectors. These sectors have been avoided by the WBC investment fund.

WBC's investment fund is well protected from this key risk because about 75% of its income is derived from institutional calibre tenants that remain resilient through the pandemic and pay their rent in full (Stapletons, Waitrose, Wickes, Tesco).

A relatively small number of the Council's SME and independent tenants have found themselves in challenging circumstances and have sought rent support from the Council.

At the onset of the pandemic WBC immediately prepared a Covid 19 rent support policy setting out a range of practical measures to support tenants whilst maximising Council income for the longer term. This policy has been successful in supporting many of our smaller tenants by allowing rent deferments to be repaid after the crisis, monthly as opposed to quarterly instalments and occasionally specific lease adjustments.

In addition the government intervened early on to provide a range of grant funding to support businesses to pay their way through the lock down. This has helped many tenants to see their way through the crisis so far.

The government has not provided any specific rent support measures to either landlords or tenants but left it for parties to agree individual arrangements to ease cash flow difficulties. It has published a Code of Practice to guide landlord and tenant discussions.

WBC's Commercial Property team has ensured that all qualifying tenants have received government grants which in turn has assisted tenants in paying rent and rates back to WBC, significantly mitigating this key risk.

The June rent quarter day saw unprecedented low rates of rent collection across the property industry. However, WBC and in particular the investment fund fared much better than the industry average due to the quality of its core investment assets, the strength of tenants and the positive impact of the Council's customer care programme. To this extent the investment fund is making a positive contribution to the Councils income collection profile as well as total receipts.

Inevitably a small number of Council tenants are likely to suffer medium to longer term set-backs to their business profitability. This will undermine their ability to continue to pay rent at their contractual rate through the crisis and beyond. In a small number of cases the Council is working with individual tenants to support them with concessions to assist their long term survival so they can continue to employ their staff and pay rent for the longer term.

The likely impact on total rent receipts is difficult to specify at this stage because the situation is still evolving. For example, some tenants that initially asked to defer rent

payments have in fact paid as usual. Other tenants that initially expected their business would not be affected have subsequently sought assistance, and vice versa. The picture is further complicated by the impact of Covid frustrating letting negotiations that would have resulted in additional income streams and conversely triggering new requirements that otherwise wouldn't have resulted in new income streams.

The impact on revenue is kept under constant review. At the end of the first half of the year the likely impact on the investment fund's existing contracted rental income is estimated as follows:

	Deferred payments	At risk, tbc	Irrecoverable
Half Year 2020/21	£90,589	£15,516	£112,669
	2.37%	0.41%	2.95%
Full Year 2020/21	£196,323	£93,103	£186,862
	5.15%	2.44%	4.90%

The negative impact of Covid on some tenants ability to pay rent will continue until a vaccine is implemented and the new normal arrives. In the meantime the balance between transmission control and freedom of economic activity will remain critical to stabilising property income across all the Councils property funds including the investment fund.

Overall WBC investment fund exposure to **revenue risk** is low but requires very careful ongoing monitoring and management because:

- The Council's key property risk (across the Operational, Regeneration and Investment portfolios) is tenant retention and tenant profitability in the face of Covid 19 economic shock.
- A number of smaller tenants are struggling to pay rent through the pandemic but the Council is working with them to protect their long term survival and ability to pay rent.
- The Council has been managing the revenue risk by close tenant support primarily via cash flow flexibility and in extreme cases further concessions frequently counterbalanced by other non-monetary lease improvements or extensions.
- The full extent of the revenue risk will depend upon the implementation of a Covid vaccine. In the meantime the risk is very varied across different sectors of the market affecting different landlords in different ways.
- The highly respected research group the Investment Property Forum ("IPF") has just published its view that the impact of Covid on UK real estate will be less immediately severe but the bounce back slower than originally expected with a period of low capital and rental growth. This is more in keeping with the Bank of England view that GDP is likely to recover by end 2021.

- Generally speaking rental income from the WBC investment fund is secure based on a range of high quality assets let to strong tenants on long leases operating resilient businesses.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	*Current estimate £280k	Y	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	Y	n/a
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	Y	n/a

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

\* Although there has been some negative impact on rental returns due to the economic shock of Covid 19 this has already been factored into the Council's Revenue Monitoring reporting for 2020/21 and is being kept under regular review. The estimated cost £280k (noted above) equates to 7% of contracted income and includes a significant contingency sum (c.33% of the total provision) for rents that are not yet distressed but might become so, depending upon tenant circumstances as the situation evolves.

### Cross-Council Implications

PIG revenue funds service delivery to the community

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Due regard is given to the Council's equality duties as relevant to any investment decision.

### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

n/a

### List of Background Papers

None

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# Agenda Item 33.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Covid-19 Response - Staff Redeployment</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Communities, Insight and Change - Keeley Clements

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The establishment of a formal staff redeployment programme enabled WBC to adapt and respond to the immediate pressures on service delivery requirements created by Covid-19. This resulted in a formal process to focus resources in a way that provided targeted support to those areas of our community most in need during the period March – September 2020.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee notes the programme undertaken and offers comments.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

During the response phase (March-September 2020) the establishment of a formal staff redeployment programme enabled (at its peak), 107 staff members to be formally redeployed to support those business critical areas enabling the continuation of statutory services and providing a tailored response to the emerging needs of residents, businesses and the voluntary sector throughout the borough.

## **Background**

The Covid-19 pandemic required an urgent response by WBC to assess the immediate impact that this was likely to cause and as such provide agile solutions that would best enable us to continue to provide statutory services and support the needs of our residents, businesses, voluntary sector organisations and staff.

The development of a formal staff redeployment programme is an example of one of the many agile solutions implemented by WBC enabling the deployment of much needed resources to those critical areas as and when they emerged throughout the initial response period.

At its peak, a total of 107 staff were formally redeployed through this programme which equates to approximately 10% of our total employees. The flexibility and willingness of staff to undertake new roles and learn new skills whilst managing their own personal response to the pandemic showcases the key behaviours and skills that we continue to strive towards throughout WBC.

## **Analysis of Issues**

### **An Agile Resourcing Solution**

Critical to a successful covid-19 response was to ensure we had an agile resourcing solution that would enable us to divert staff and resources to priority and emerging areas. As such a framework document outlining the key principles of redeployment was drafted and agreed by CLT to enable the establishment of a formal staff redeployment programme.

### **Demand Management & Approval Process**

To ensure equity and oversight of resourcing requests, a formal approval process was established for both demand management and resource release. A daily request list was circulated to ECLT to review and discuss at Directorate level and resources proposed and released to meet the requests.

Requests for resources were supported by a brief outline of the key requirements of the role and any essential skill requirements. Individuals were identified on this basis using both knowledge of the substantive role, Directorate suggestions/solutions and any individuals who had put themselves forward to volunteer for redeployment where they could be released.

Resourcing requests were both internal and external from our voluntary sectors partners e.g. CAB & The Link

### **Resource Tracking & Support**

A central resourcing tracker was established to ensure all resourcing requests were logged as well as tracking those staff who were redeployed into new roles. Details such as assignment dates, In going & Out going Directorate, role description and key skills required were also tracked and as such enabled a daily snapshot of our redeployment position to be issued. See Appendix A for an example.

A redeployment agreement was sent to all redeployed staff and both their interim and substantive manager which ensured staff were supported during their redeployed assignment and clarified the role expectations on all parties during the period of redeployment.

Additionally, a redeployment survey was sent to all redeployed staff to check on their wellbeing during their assignment and any staff who indicated a concern received a follow up phone call and in some cases, staff were released early from their placements and backfilled and/or signposted to our Employee Assistance Scheme.

### **Closing the Redeployment Programme**

The redeployment of staff was designed to be a short term programme providing an agile resourcing response to Covid-19 pressures. As such, a formal redeployment withdrawal agreement plan was agreed by CLT to release staff back to substantive posts by the end of September and any longer term resourcing pressures were to be identified and addressed by a longer term solution.

As part of the Redeployment principles framework, a proposal has been developed and agreed to ensure any staff who were required to undertake a higher graded role for the period of redeployment receive the appropriate backdated honorarium.

### **Feedback on the Redeployment Programme**

Jake Morrison (CAB) commented on “the high level of commitment and flexibility displayed by WBC staff, especially as the new roles were delivered virtually.”

Staff redeployment stories were posted as part of the regular Covid-19 all staff weekly newsletter with staff commenting on the enjoyment and satisfaction of being able to contribute to the WBC response

Establishment of a redeployment principles framework and governance over release approvals and demand prioritisation helped to establish a centralised approach to redeployment to maximise the success of its outcome (approx. 10% of the workforce redeployed at its peak).

### **Future Provision and Improvements**

In the event that it becomes necessary to recommence the redeployment programme, we have retained and cleansed all tools and templates associated with the programme.

A list of all staff who were redeployed by area and skill set has been retained should we need to re-assign staff quickly.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	Yes	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	Yes	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	Yes	N/A

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Honorarium to be paid to those redeployed staff undertaking a higher graded role for the period of the redeployed assignment.

### Cross-Council Implications

The Redeployment Programme enabled WBC to provide an agile and targeted response to ensure the continuation of statutory services delivery during March – September 2020. Staff were redeployed between Directorates and joint ownership and decision making was taken at CLT to agree priority placement and staff release. Closer partnership working was fostered with our voluntary sector partners during this time with staff redeployed to support these organisations enhancing understanding on both sides of the valuable role and contribution working together can make to better serve our community in the longer term.

As staff were able to be redeployed, this enabled us to deliver services in new ways to ensure we maximised the support we were able to give our residents and could priorities demand. For example establishing the Community Hub and having welfare check teams on the ground making door to door welfare calls to our most vulnerable residents. Utilising staff who were in the large part unable to deliver their substantive roles due to Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a cost effective way of continuing to delivery statutory services and emerging demand as well as resulting in feedback from staff who felt they were undertaking a meaningful role and contribution to the WBC response to Covid-19.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Due regard was given to the WBC duty under the Equality Act. The establishment of a formal redeployment programme provided staff who were unable to undertake their substantive role due to lock down restrictions or the requirement to shield at home with an opportunity to undertake a redeployment assignment where appropriate.

Redeployed staff were equipped to work remotely with provision of a mobile phone and/or laptop where this had not been issued as part of their substantive role and to receive appropriate training to undertake the redeployed assignment.

The ability to redeploy staff to priority areas also enabled WBC to provide a high level of support to our most vulnerable residents, for example, being able to follow up with door to door welfare calls to those vulnerable residents who didn't respond to initial phone calls. Alternative ways of being able to contact our residents enabled us to have a greater impact and range on supporting our borough.

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
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N/A
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>
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None
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# Redeployment Snapshot 30/04/2020

- Number of staff redeployed: 74.88 FTE (103 Headcount)
  - 10.71 Food Distribution Hub
  - 9.75 Citizen's Advice
  - 12.52 Customer Delivery
  - 3.08 Operational Commissioning
  - 9.84 Care Worker Support Team
  - 6.88 ASC Welfare Calls
  - 3.76 Link
  - 8.61 Physical Welfare Checks
  - 1.49 Optalis Care Workers
  - 4.0 Government Grants-Local Business
  - 0.8 Covid-19 Testing
  - 3.45 Comms, HR, Operational Property

21

Requests
Existing: 1
Closed: 13+1 on hold
New: 0
Open: 1

- **New Requests:**
- **In Progress:**
- **Optalis carers:** Request reduced to 20-25 people as Optalis carrying out own recruitment. 350 WBC casual employees have been emailed. 2 names passed to Optalis, 3 engaging with further queries. No response from internal Comms.

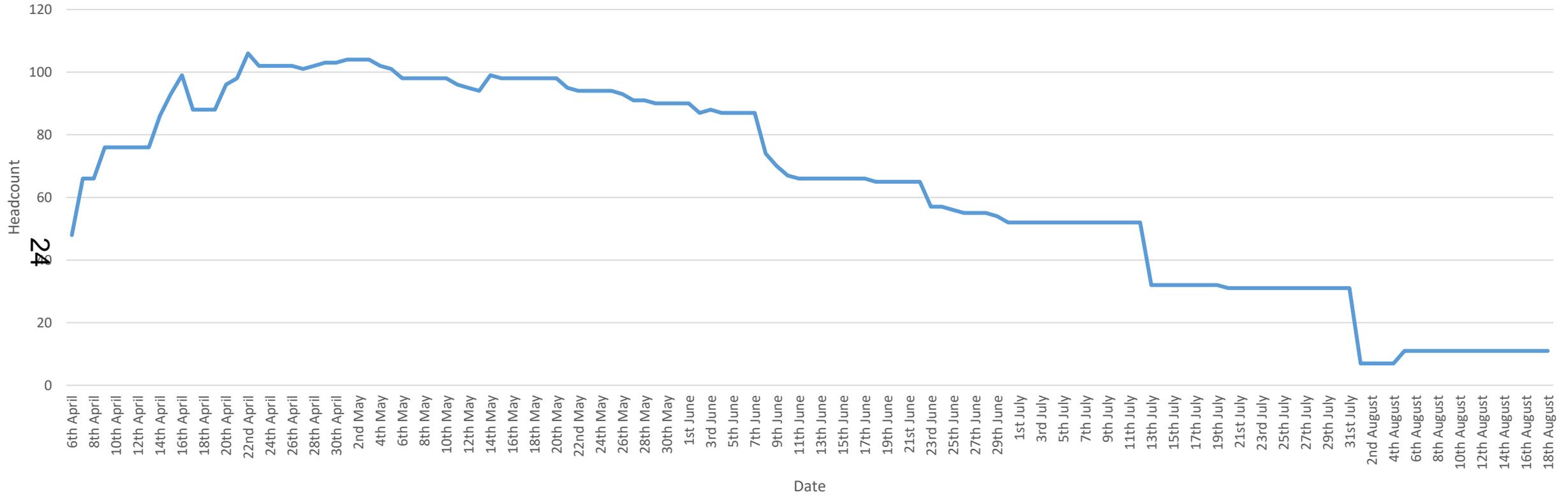
Action	Owner

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Total Headcount of Redeployed by Area

External Redeployment	Total Headcount	Internal Redeployed	Total Headcount
Citizens Advice	19	ASC welfare Calls	12
Community Hub (Food Distribution)	14	Customer Delivery	17
The Link Scheme	5	Communications	1
Volunteer Groups Support (Receiving Manager, QA, data etc.)	2	Economic Prosperity & Place (Govt Grants-Local Business)	15
		HR	1
		Meet & Greet for Extra Care Settings	4
		Operational Property	4
		Care Worker Support Team	15
		Children's Commissioning	3
		Test & Trace	1
		Welfare Checks on Non-contactable Vulnerable (Door Knocking)	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>

### Daily Headcount of Redeployed



# Agenda Item 34.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Covid-19 Communications and Engagement Response</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Communities, Insight & Change - Keeley Clements

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The report details the communications and engagements response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee consider the key challenges, responses and conclusions set out in the report.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Covid-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on all our residents, businesses and communities. It has also had a transformative impact on the way WBC provides many of its services.

This report summarises how the council sought to support the community through the pandemic with timely and targeted communications.

## **Background**

At the start of the pandemic, WBC set six objectives for its communications:

- Provide accurate information on Public Health and Government guidance and regulations
- Explain changes to WBC services and facilities
- Promote and explain the Wokingham Borough Community Response and other support available
- Help communities and individuals people cope with Covid-19 and lockdown
- Celebrate the contribution of volunteers and key workers
- Promote the role of WBC across the community

Although Covid-19 effected all residents, targeted communications and engagement was required for some groups who were identified as at greater risk:

- People with underlying health conditions
- BAME communities
- Older people

Communications channels used:

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Target and purpose</b>
Social media	All residents: to provide regular, timely communications to support all objectives
Printed flyer delivery	All residents, with particular target of those who are not digitally active
Weekly local newspaper advertisement	All residents, with particular target of those who are not digitally active
Media releases	All residents
Wokingham Borough Connect (email newsletter to 40,000 addresses)	All residents
Direct communication with voluntary and community sector	All residents, with particular target at vulnerable families, vulnerable adults and older people
Direct communication to BAME groups	BAME community: direct communication via the WBC community engagement and localities team
Direct communication with vulnerable	People with underlying medical conditions contacted directly via Adult Social Care and the Wokingham Borough Community Response
Elected members and town and parish councils	Elected members and town & parishes kept regularly informed in order to help them disseminate accurate messages

## **Social media**

Social media has been the main channel for WBC Covid communication. This is because of the advantages it offered over other forms:

- Timeliness – WBC has needed to issue messages at very short notice throughout the Pandemic (for instance when Government guidance has changed with no warning). Social media can be produced quickly, published instantly and disseminated swiftly.
- Cost-effectiveness – the vast volume of Covid-19 messages that WBC had to issue (in particular during the peak of the pandemic) necessitated use of a low-resource channel – social media can be produced quickly by staff and is free to distribute
- Reach – although social media has its limitations and cannot be relied upon exclusively, its reach is extensive compared to traditional media.
- Appropriateness during lock-down – Social media had the ability to reach people in their homes when their movements were restricted by lock-down and without the need for physical contact – it is a socially-distanced form of communication in contrast to printed material

## **Printed flyer distribution**

A flyer detailing how people could access support from the Wokingham Borough Community Response was distributed to residents across the borough. Due to the short-timescales a Royal Mail delivery was not possible (lead-time is about three weeks) therefore a delivery company supported by volunteer deliver through town and parish councils was used. The flyer provided information on how people could get support and how people could volunteer to help in the Community Response.

## **Weekly advertisement in local newspaper**

From April 22 to June 30 (16 weeks) WBC took out weekly adverts in The Wokingham Paper. These varied from wrap adverts (front, inside front, back and inside back), double page spreads and single pages depending on the messages being delivered. The channel was one of the ways we aimed to reach those people who are not active on social media.

## **Media releases**

Given the fast-changing nature of the WBC's response to the pandemic in its early stages, traditional media release were not always the most effective way to communicate updates and the local media was kept informed through regular one to one contacts from the Communications, Engagement and Marketing (CEM) team and Executive members. However, in other areas (such as promoting the community response, WBC support to residents and businesses and planned services changes, news releases were issued.

## **Wokingham Borough Connect (direct email bulletin to database of approx. 40,000 addresses)**

Thanks to the relaxation of GDPR, WBC was able to collate its email databases (all those who have signed up to receive information on any subject) into a single Covid-19 list of addresses in order to provide them regular updates. In line with industry best practice, the bulletins are kept brief and factual with links provided to more information.

## **Direct communication with voluntary and community sector groups**

The CEM team regularly attends the Covid-19 Voluntary Sector Action Group meetings to ensure two-way communication of keep issues. Updates are provided through this meeting for dissemination to the wider voluntary and community sector.

## **Direct communication with BAME community groups**

When it became apparent that there was a national trend of higher Covid-19 rates among the BAME community, WBC instigated weekly direct contact (via the Communities and Localities team to provide information directly to BAME community groups and to receive feedback.

## **Direct communication with vulnerable people**

WBC Children's Services and Adult Social Care maintained direct contact with vulnerable people (including those with underlying health conditions who were shielding) in order to

provide information and ensure essentials such as medicine and food could be delivered via the community response

### **Town and Parish Councils and elected members**

Regular updates have been provided (via the leader of the council) to elected members and town & parish councils to give an overview of the Covid-19 situation and allow for accurate information to be disseminated.

## **ANALYSIS OF ISSUES**

### **Key challenge: volume and range of issues:**

At the height of the first wave, the number of issues that required communication was unprecedented: new government guidance and regulations, public health messages, WBC service updates, support schemes available all required regular promotion alongside specific issues such as PPE shortage, care home cases and indirect Covid related issues such as increases in domestic abuse, fly-tipping and mental health issues.

### **Response:**

From Mid-March to June, the CEM team suspended all non-covid communications and increased its volume of social media posts (from an average of four per day to six) in order to ensure all issues could be covered. The team also adopted an informal shift pattern to ensure emergency communications and social media were monitored from 7am to 7pm and that sufficient resource was available at weekends. The reach of our social media posts during the pandemic has increased:

- Year-on-year average daily reach of Facebook posts March to August 2019: 6,700
- Year-on-year average daily reach of Facebook posts March to August 2020: 13,000

Weekly adverts were also taken out in the local paper in order to ensure key messages were communicated accurately.

### **Key challenge: Reaching residents who do not access social media**

As outlined above social media has been the optimum method of communication during the pandemic. However, an estimated 30% of residents are not active on social media and therefore other methods needed to be deployed.

### **Response:**

The local paper adverts helped but from April 17 the council was also able to directly email about 40,000 people via 'Wokingham Borough Connect' e-bulletin.

WBC has also used signage and poster to reinforce messages where appropriate – such as to promote social distancing in public spaces and mask wearing in shops and other buildings.

**Key challenge: Getting messages to harder to reach groups**

The key target groups for our Covid-19 communications included those who are harder to reach with standard communications, such as younger people and some members of the BAME community.

**Response:**

It is reasonable to assume that many members of the BAME community are reachable via our social media, however, due to the higher national infection rates, additional communication was provided through weekly contact from the community engagement / localities team to BAME community representative groups.

Younger people have been targeted through innovative use of social media including through expanded use of Instagram and initial use of TikTok.

**Key Challenge: Conflicting priorities and messages**

WBC communications has attempted to keep to national and guidelines and consistent messaging in order to provide residents with clear advice and information. At times, this has presented issues with conflicting priorities and/or messages, such as:

PPE – there was a national shortage in the early stages of the pandemic. WBC communications was asked to support a public appeal for PPE in order to ensure that local supply was maintained

Care Homes – WBC introduced measures to protect its care homes that went beyond Government guidance. This presented a communications challenge to highlight the positive, proactive support put in place without raising unnecessary fears in the community

Town / village centre recovery – as shops and other businesses have been allowed to re-open, WBC has had the potentially conflicting priorities of encouraging people to support them while minimising the risk of outbreaks

Test and Trace – the national shortage of lab capacity has led to difficulties for people attempting to access tests in many parts of the country, including Wokingham Borough. This issue has been exacerbated by people seeking tests when they do not need to according to government guidance. WBC communications has had to balance the need to encourage people to get tested when they need to (but only when they need to) with an overall desire to maintain public confidence in the system

**Response:**

WBC priority has been to protect and support for its own residents and so has been prepared to issue news release and public statement that challenge the government to rectify shortcomings. However, these have been balanced by the need to maintain public confidence and to demonstrate that the council was proactively seeking solutions. For example, WBC launched an appeal for PPE, but made it clear that our stocks were

always sufficient for need and that it was lobbying for more. Similarly, WBC did not simply publicise the issues being faced by care homes; these were placed in national context with a focus on the measures being put in place

**CONCLUSION**

In summary, the pandemic has presented unique challenges to WBC due to the volume of communication required under a single topic and the importance of that messaging: Covid-19 has touched everybody’s lives in fundamental ways and WBC has been one of the key organisations responsible for leading the community safely through the crisis.

The communications response to Covid has shown WBC is able to directly reach a large audience (approximately 24-26,000 actively opening the weekly e-bulletins and daily Facebook reach of 16,000 views a day at the peak of the first wave) and can provide information, advice and signposting to support across a wide-range of issues.

Communications to specific groups is more challenging and, where WBC has successfully achieve this during the pandemic, it has been through direct personal contact to community groups / contacts.

Younger people also remain a challenge for WBC communications and although progress has been made during the pandemic to develop channels that may be more attractive to this demographic (such as TikTok and Instagram) there are opportunities to develop these further and to explore alternative methods to build more engagement with this demographic.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	n/a	Yes	R
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	n/a	Yes	R
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	n/a	Yes	R

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
n/a

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
n/a

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Due regard has been given to WBC's duties under the Equality Act

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
n/a

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
None

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Covid-19 pandemic - Community Safety Response</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Communities, Insight & Change - Keeley Clements

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The report highlights the effects and the council's response in relation to the community safety agenda to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee consider the report relating to the Council's Community Safety response to the Covid-19 pandemic

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The effects of Covid-19 pandemic have been wide-ranging and a number of services have continued to be delivered to respond to concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour, compliance with Covid regulations and other issues that impact on the community safety agenda.

Lockdown restrictions led to a decrease in some types of crime such as residential burglary as homes were occupied for longer. However, living in close proximity for extended periods combined with periods of good weather led to an increase in anti-social behaviour and concerns about compliance with the lockdown and social distancing rules.

This report has been prepared with input from our Community Safety, Localities, Place and Environmental Health Teams and summarises some of the impacts and the actions taken by the council with our partners to keep residents safe and reduce the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour.

## **Background**

Ensuring Safe, Strong Communities is identified as a priority in our Community Vision. One of the main aims of the council is helping our residents, businesses, and communities to both be and feel safe. The effects of Covid-19 pandemic have been wide-ranging and a number of services have continued to be delivered to respond to concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour, compliance with Covid regulations and other issues that impact on our wider community safety.

## Analysis of Issues

Police recorded crime April to June 2019 compared with April to June 2020 lockdown period.

Crime Type	April - June 2019	April - June 2020	% Change	Change Actual
All Crime (excl. fraud)	1712	1709	+0%	-3 
Residential Burglary – Dwelling	62	38	-39%	-24 
Burglary – Sheds/Garages	23	29	+26%	+6 
Violence with injury	164	180	+10%	+16 
Domestic Abuse Recorded Incidents	182	174	-4%	-8 
Domestic Abuse non recorded Incidents	121	48	-60%	-73 
Drugs offences Possession*	54	60	+11%	+6 
Criminal Damage	229	183	-20%	-46 
Theft of Vehicle	50	38	-24%	-12 
Theft from Vehicle	107	55	-49%	-52 
Hate Crime*	78	101	+29%	+23 

\* Hate Crime includes Racially or Religious Aggravated Crimes, incidents recorded as crime and non-crime occurrences of Racist, Religious, Homophobic, Transphobic and Disability incidents.

The key crimes affected by Covid19 were burglary and theft from a vehicle which significantly reduced over the lockdown period as residents remained at home reducing the amount of properties being left unoccupied for any period. As only essential car journeys were permitted, the reduced numbers of organised groups traveling to the borough to carry out these crimes were also thought to be a factor. Since the easing of the lockdown burglary has begun to see some small increases. Crime reporting is discussed at our multi-agency Community Safety Partnership meetings and a monthly problem-solving tasking group. A working group is also being established specifically to review the impact of Hate crime.

### Domestic Abuse

There has been a rise in the number of calls being received by the National Domestic Violence Helpline (approximately 40% increase). Some areas and larger cities and towns, including London, have reported increases. Data from European countries tells us that once lockdown measures were relaxed there has been a spike in the number of reported incidents and victims coming forward seeking help.

Locally we have been monitoring the situation very closely. With weekly multi-agency meetings with our commissioned local service provider Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA), Thames Valley Police (MARAC Chair), and the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group Safeguarding Lead. The current picture locally is stable. The local service provider has not seen any unusual levels of increases in victims coming forward for help.

Thames Valley Police incidents, whilst stable through the main lock down period have started to see an increase in the number of crime reports. Increased demand was planned for with our local service provider who redeployed internal staff in readiness. In addition to this.

- Communications have been ramped up via our local campaign with information being sent out on all media platforms giving victims information about how and who to contact.
- In partnership with Thames Valley Police we have rolled out DA awareness training for supermarket staff on indicators of DA and information about our local service provider to distribute at till points in supermarkets.
- Work was also being undertaken with local pharmacies on providing a safe space for victims to make phone calls and disclosures.
- Front line WBC staff including social work professionals and housing have received up to date webinar-based training on safety planning and keeping victims practically safe during lockdown (safety planning).
- WBC Housing Team fitted out temporary accommodation in anticipation of victims making approaches for emergency housing in the forthcoming weeks and months.
- A borough wide needs assessment has recommended a dedicated Domestic Abuse post to take forward essential service improvements, Funding has been identified to establish this role until April 20 and a growth is being sought to establish a permanent role.

Our Home Refuge Service for victims of domestic abuse where the perpetrator no longer lives with them had an additional 20 referrals compared to 5 for the same period from last year. Referrals came from Berkshire Women's Aid, Social Workers and also self-referrals. The service adds security equipment to the house which can range from something as simple as a padlock on a gate, up to security lighting and changing locks

### **Parks and Open Spaces**

Given the warm weather and other lockdown restrictions parks and open spaces became popular destinations. This was further exacerbated once people were able to travel for leisure activities and gave rise to concerns about overcrowding and compliance with social distancing requirements.

The council put up signage, markings, undertook countryside patrols and communications to encourage social distancing and avoid overcrowding. Parking was initially restricted in some locations that were subject to overcrowding such as Dinton Pastures. Problems with inconsiderate parking in residential areas close to some parks required regular monitoring and liaison work with the police to ensure that residents could still access their homes safely.

In addition several of the boroughs parks and green spaces experienced increased levels of anti-social behaviour. This has included drinking, setting fires, BBQ's, playing loud music, jumping into lakes and gathering in these spaces until the early hours of the morning. Whilst the issues have now abated in some locations, others have continued

to cause nuisance and annoyance to residents in close proximity. The continued hotspot locations have been escalated to the multi-agency problem solving tasking group (PSTG) locations have been put on police patrol plans and been subject to ongoing police operations.

The Covid-19 pandemic this has been a challenging time for Thames Valley Police. Over the last few months the majority of neighbourhood police officers have been taken away from their normal duties to support the response teams due to shortages limiting the ability to respond to some chronic ASB problems.

### **Play Areas**

The Council operates 99 play areas across the borough. During lockdown all of these had to be closed to the public with new signage installed. Despite being closed, all the play areas had to continue to be inspected each week to maintain the Council's health and safety obligations. The Council also supported the 17 town and parish councils with advice and signage to close their play areas.

In July, the Council reopened its play areas. This included a specific safety assessment of each play area and new signage being installed to remind residents of how to use them safely.

### **Housing - Anti-Social Behaviour**

Complaints about residents breaking lockdown regulations saw a significant increase in the number of issues referred to the council. The majority of these were in relation to housing association properties and the non-compliance with the government regulations. This including people gathering in properties and having loud parties. A co-ordinated response to these complaints was put in place including the escalation of cases to the borough anti-social behaviour panel. Identified issues included some Registered Social Landlords (RSL) lacking robust management of tenancies and residents being unclear who and where to report issues to. Some RSL's required further assistance from our community safety team in managing cases due to the lack of capacity, staff cover issues and reduced capacity in the courts.

### **Young People Prevention and Diversion**

As part of the response to the pandemic the Community Safety Partnership recognised that young people continued to require support and diversion. This has required putting in place new ways of engaging young people who have been traditionally hard to engage. Working in partnership with Reading Football Trust we have put in place an online gaming support platform. The project which is run by football coaches playing football virtually with young people to engage them in structured support for mental health and emotional wellbeing.

### **Extremism**

The tragic events at Forbury Gardens, Reading, on 20th June 2020, in which three people died and three were seriously injured triggered recovery and rapid response work from a number of partners. This has included work with the Home Office and Department of Higher Education to look at strengthening the work already under way. Sadly, one of the victims was a teacher at a Wokingham School. Support services for staff and pupils were deployed to ensure that those affected were helped with mental and emotional wellbeing. Localities staff provided a visible presence at the school gates and in local parks for the first few days. In addition, all our local Channel Panel

(safeguarding for people vulnerable to radicalisation) cases have been reviewed following the incident.

Channel Panels are part of the government's 'Prevent' strategy, which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting extremism. They are multi-agency meetings, chaired by the Local Authority, designed to identify, and provide support to individuals who are at risk.

### **Scams, Doorstep Crime and Fair Trading**

During the pandemic we were alerted to national concerns around scams and how fraudsters were taking advantage of the crisis to prey on some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. National scams have included track and trace, offers of disinfecting driveways and fake PPE equipment. Locally our numbers of incidents have been low, and we have worked with our Trading Standards colleagues in the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) to increase the communications across several social media platforms. We also undertook some work around ensuring that those being contacted by voluntary sector groups as part of the Wokingham Covid19 response had clear advice and guidance for those worried or being targeted in relation to scams.

Service requests for advice received during June included an increase in general enquiries to Trading Standards from consumers asking about their rights; a 219% increase compared to June 2019 24% of the notifications to Trading Standards related to the travel sector.

### **Illegal Encampments**

Whilst the borough did not experience an increase in illegal encampments because of the Covid lockdown, our response to them was altered significantly by government guidance on how to respond to them. To help prevent the virus spreading, local authorities were asked to tolerate illegal encampments when they occurred on their land, whilst there was no change to the way that private landowners were able to remove illegal encampments. This resulted in an illegal encampment in Woosehill being in place for a week that caused significant distress to local residents due to significant anti-social behaviour. Ultimately this encampment was removed when the impact on local residents became too great.

In response to this, the Council established a temporary tolerance site at the MereOak Park & Ride. This site was ultimately successful with a number of encampments taking place there without incident.

### **Fly-Tipping**

In line with the national picture fly-tipping experienced during the past four months (April to July) increased significantly. The majority of the tipping was household waste potentially arising from tidying up and DIY projects during lockdown. During this time, despite maintaining waste collection services, the two Waste & Recycling Centres available to Wokingham Borough residents were closed.

The inspection and clearance of fly-tips by council teams continued throughout lockdown. CCTV cameras have been installed in hot spot locations across the borough and we have issued over 70 Fixed Penalty Notices since April. Fly-tipping awareness campaigns continued on social media.

Trading Standards working with our Localities Team undertook an operation that identified 60 businesses advertising on Facebook to collect waste, 78% of those were identified as holding the necessary Waste Carriers Licence issued by the Environment Agency. Following further enquiries and contact with those advertising, 7 businesses have not responded to our request for licence details and will shortly be sent enforcement advice.

### **Noise Complaints**

There was a 31% increase in noise complaints reported compared to 2019, with an increase in those from domestic sources. As some commercial businesses are reopening and as background noise levels remain relatively low in terms of traffic/aircraft noise residents will be more sensitive to these changes so we are mindful of this when dealing with complaints and aim to encourage discussion and mediation through the easing phases. Several considerate neighbour and be kind messages were distributed via social media.

### **Bonfires**

Since the start of the pandemic our Environmental Health Team saw a large increase (622%) in bonfire complaints across the partnership compared to the same period last year. A guidance note on Bonfire Advice was produced asking residents to think of others and not light bonfires during the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown because many people at home are vulnerable and may have respiratory issues, or even be fighting the Coronavirus itself. The same information is being given to residents who contact them directly and we have put out communications about bonfires out through social media.

### **Events**

As we went into lockdown the council created an events subgroup to advise the Gold response group regarding scheduled council organised or other permitted events to ensure they complied with the Covid regulations. This work has now been included in the existing Safety Advisory Group Process to ensure that relevant parties have access to the COVID risk assessment to ensure that mass gathering, and track and trace requirements are complied with as some types of events re-start.

### **Premises**

PPP reported 119 Covid Business Restrictions enquiries and service requests across the partnership. In two cases prohibition notices were served (one was later lifted) for premises that had been opening in contravention of the regulations to close.

### **Pop-up food premises**

During lockdown, a number of new 'pop-up' food businesses operating via Facebook pages and selling into local Facebook groups. These businesses are difficult to identify as they have no physical premises and are often selling on a very small and local scale through non-traditional means.

Environmental Health officers identified a number of such businesses and although initially some were difficult to contact via phone calls and emails, we have been able to contact them successfully via Facebook messenger and they submitted their food registrations. They also posted out a number of social media messages on Facebook and Twitter reminding those who are thinking of starting, or have recently started, a new food business what their obligations are and how to contact Environmental Health to register as a food business.

## **Premises Re-opening**

On 15th June, some non-essential premises were able to re-open and PPP officers visited town centres to see how the re-opening went.

To help businesses a Covid 19 Tool Kit was developed and overall, it was felt the premises were well prepared for their new responsibilities.

On Saturday 4th July, the day premises such as pubs and restaurants were permitted to re-open, officers from Licensing, Trading Standards and Environmental Health carried out patrols in partnership with TVP in Wokingham and Woodley town centres.

The officers considered the use of outdoor space, noise from people congregating, any music issues, how social distancing was being managed indoors/out and the logging of contact details for Test and Trace.

Since 6th July, Health and Safety patrols have been carried out for two days a week in Twyford, Woodley and Wokingham town centre. Officers have been observing cafes/restaurants/bars/pubs and shops and offering advice as needed. This has been an ideal opportunity to promote our Covid 19 Toolkit and check on Covid 19

Further, these visits to the main retail and hospitality centres gave the opportunity to check that those premises still meant to be closed, such as nail bars and tattooists, had remained so. As of 13th July, hairdressers and barbers have been added to the list of premises being observed on patrol.

Previously the Food Standards Agency advised Local Authorities that they were to prioritise urgent reactive work and carry out enforcement revisits as required. As of mid-July, as a 'medium' priority we may now also proactively inspect higher risk premises that are overdue/due to the end of September 2020. During visits will concerns noted about lack of Covid-19 control measures and deal with these as 'matters arising' under Health and Safety legislation.

## **Conclusions**

In summary, the Covid lockdown presented some new and unexpected challenges as well as exacerbating some of the effects that we see during shorter holiday periods of good weather by continuing for an extended period. We responded with our partners to a range of challenges as they presented themselves and we will have to continue to adapt and respond as we move into recovery.

Maintaining accurate, timely and clear communications with our residents, businesses, and service delivery partners has been crucial during these uncertain and changing times. This has provided vital information on how to manage the unexpected elements of responding to the Covid outbreak, along with providing confidence that important and valued elements of Council service delivery have continued.

One common frustration with a number of issues faced during lockdown has been managing resident's expectations about what the Council is able to do in response to lockdown restrictions and some community safety issues such as low level anti-social behaviour / noise nuisances, and the separation between local authority powers and what enforcement action the police can take. In many cases it's been those issues where local authority powers are limited that have persisted throughout lockdown and caused the most interaction with councillors from the borough and town and parish councils.

A good example of this expectation gap is the reopening of shops and the management of people visiting our main town centres. Whilst the council deployed staff into these town centres to provide advice and reassurance to residents, these staff did not have the powers to force people to adhere to the Covid regulations on social distancing or wearing of facemasks. In many of the different issues explored within this report, the Council has had to manage the increased expectations of responding to the Covid outbreak using its existing powers.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	n/a	Yes	R
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	n/a	Yes	R
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	n/a	Yes	R

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
n/a

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
n/a

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Due regard has been given to WBC's duties under the Equality Act

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
n/a

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
none

<b>Contact</b> Nicholas Austin	<b>Service</b> Customer and Localities
<b>Telephone No</b> 0118 974 6000	<b>Email</b> nicholas.austin@wokingham.gov.uk

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>COVID 19 Pandemic : Wokingham Borough Community Response (WBCR)</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community & Corporate Overview and Scrutiny on 22 September 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Matt Pope, Director Adult Services

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To provide members with an overview of how the Council, the Community and Voluntary Sector and Partners worked together to meet the needs of vulnerable residents during the Covid 19 pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee consider the presentation outlining the WBCR to the Covid-19 pandemic.

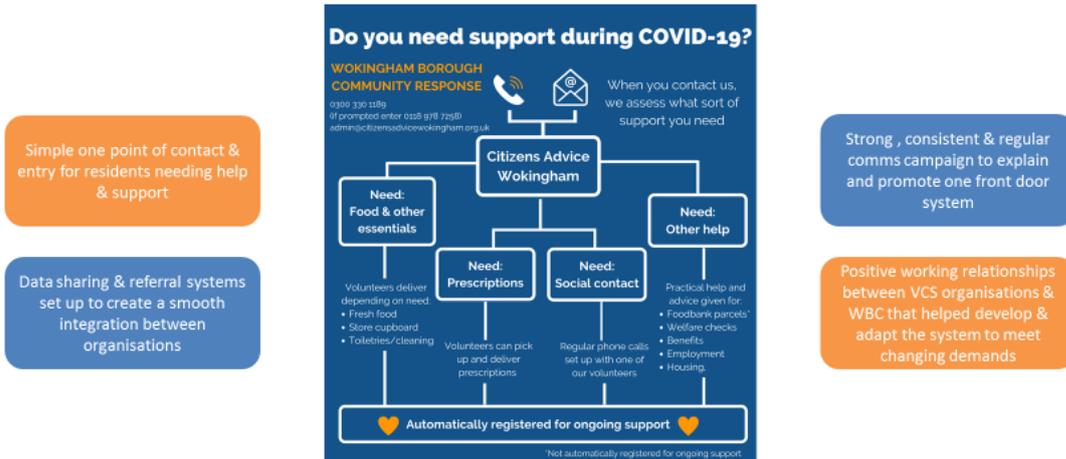
## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Council met with local voluntary sector organisations in mid March 2020 and started to meet the needs immediately. The aims were to

- To provide Wokingham Borough residents with the support, help and guidance they need during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Ensure that all residents have access to food, essential supplies and medication
- Proactively identify and contact the most vulnerable in the borough to check on their welfare and understand their needs
- Work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector to effectively deliver the services residents need during the pandemic

The two diagrams below set out the approach undertaken:

## 09 Our Approach – The Process (core response services)



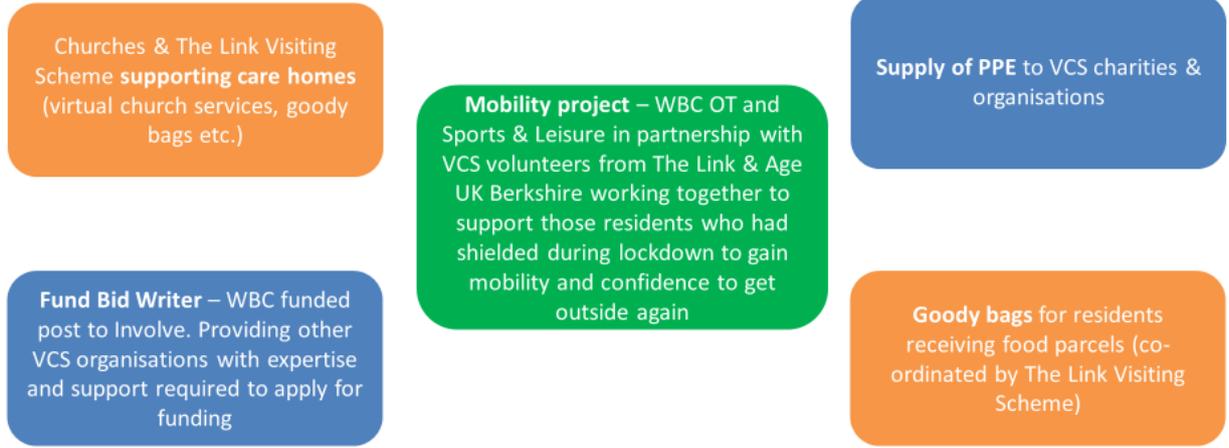
**Can you help?**  
 The Wokingham Borough Community Response needs your help!

- Food & other essentials**
- Financial donations**

**Drop off locations:**  
 Wokingham Borough Community Hub - Monday to Saturday 9.30 to 3.30  
 23 Queen's Square, Centre, London Rd, Wokingham  
 Other locations - Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 10am to 12pm  
 Lower Parks Library, The Old Library, The Old Library

**Just Giving Fundraiser:**  
 Visit the First Step Online Charity page for the Wokingham Borough Community Response to COVID-19

## 10 Our Approach – Additional response services & activities



The feedback from residents has been very positive and we have continued to monitor and review our response to meet changing needs during the COVID 19 pandemic. We still meet weekly to agree next steps and monitor the response.

## Background

The appended presentation gives the detail on the response.

## Analysis of Issues

The appended presentation gives the detail on the response.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£376k (cost)		Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	nil		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	nil		

#### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

#### Cross-Council Implications

None

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard has been given to WBC's duties under the Equality Act

#### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None

#### List of Background Papers

Powerpoint presentation (appended)

**Contact** : Matt Pope / Martin Sloan

**Service** : Adult Services

**Telephone No** 0118 974 6000

**Email:** matt.pope@wokingham.gov.uk

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# Wokingham Borough Community Response (WBCR)

45

Overview & Scrutiny

01



**WOKINGHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Contents

1. Our Ambition
2. Our Approach
3. Impact & Outcomes
4. Keys to Success
5. The Future

## 03 Our Ambition

- **To provide Wokingham Borough residents with the support, help and guidance they need during the Covid-19 pandemic**
- **Ensure that all residents have access to food, essential supplies and medication**
- **Proactively identify and contact the most vulnerable in the borough to check on their welfare and understand their needs**
- **Work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector to effectively deliver the services residents need during the pandemic**

## 04 Our Ambition

**Key objectives** – set & agreed at the start of the group meetings, retained throughout to keep focus

- 1. One Front Door – various Groups underneath**
- 2. How do we recruit new volunteers safely?**
- 3. How do we deliver our current services, whilst managing new demand?**
- 4. How do we work together on delivering clear and consistent communication?**

# 05 Our Approach - Partnership



Just Around The Corner (JATC)

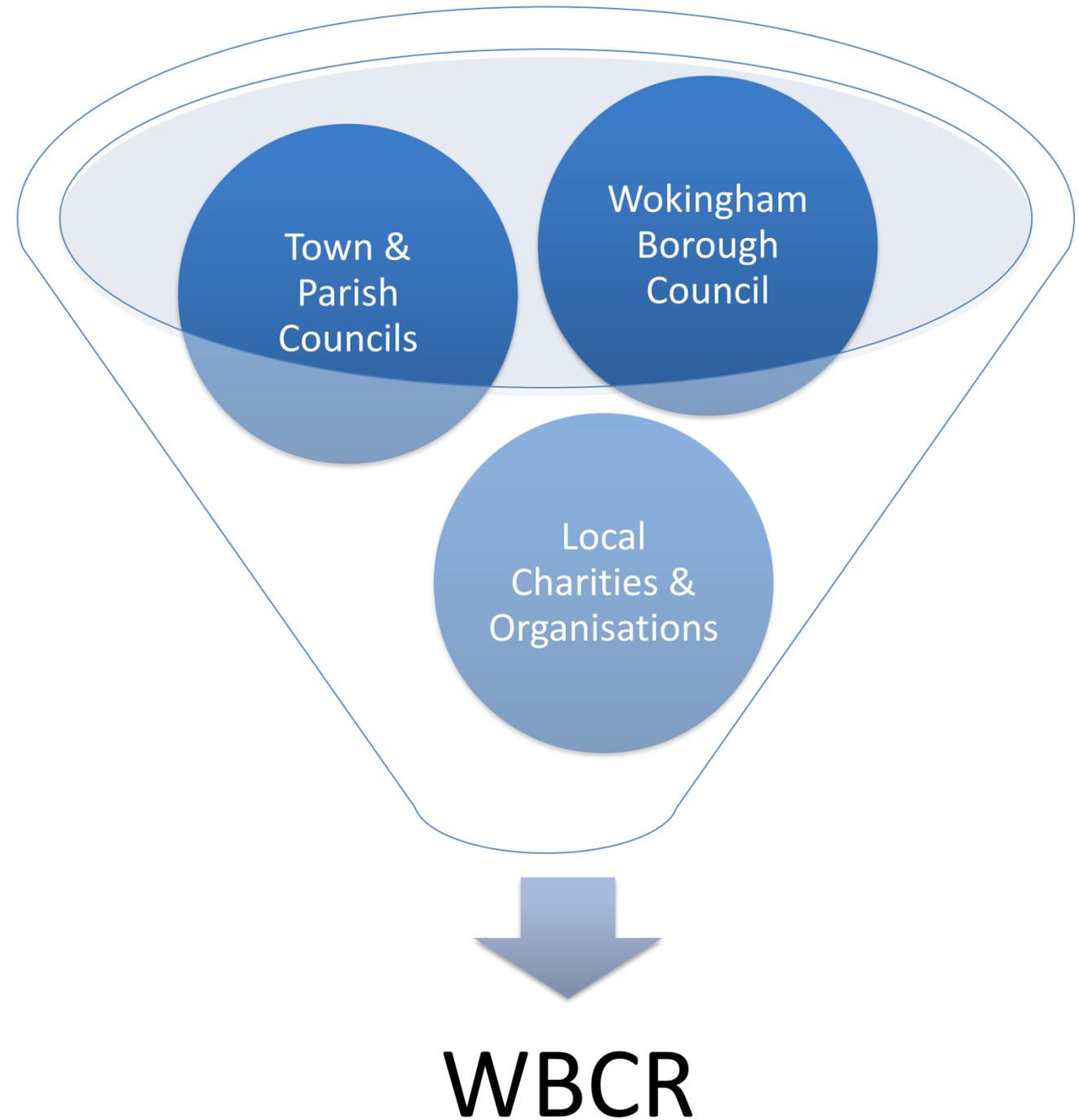


Norreys Church (Fresh food hub)

49



Home Start



# 06 Our Approach - Partnership

## Local Community Groups

- As local community Covid groups set up across the borough during the pandemic, we reached out to them to bring them into the response.
- We ensured that they could operate within some set parameters in terms of receiving referrals & where to signpost for professional services.
- Guidance for areas such as safeguarding was provided to the groups by Involve.
- The Groups were instrumental in supporting residents at a neighbourhood level with services such as shopping and prescription collection.
- These groups will be aligned to the Friendship Alliance moving forwards.

50



# 07 Our Approach – WBC role in VCS Action Group & Response

## WBC 'one team' approach & attitude

- No barriers or silo working
- Quick decisions
- Supportive relationships

## Specialist input provided essential insight & guidance

- Public Health
- Health integration
- Community Safety Partnership
- Localities (inc BAME engagement)
- Children's Services
- CEM team
- IMT Data team
- Finance

## Teams on the ground working with VCS organisations

- Sports & Leisure (Food Hub)
- Redeployed staff from across organisation working in Citizens Advice & The Link

## Proactive approach

- Use of data from central Government & Health partners (GP & PHM data) to identify & proactively contact the most vulnerable
- Regular welfare calls made to over 2,000 people in the borough by WBC ASC

Structure & Governance, Leadership & Decision making

# 08 Our Approach – One Front Door



Contact One front door

Triage needs

Help & support delivered

# 09 Our Approach – The Process (core response services)

Simple one point of contact & entry for residents needing help & support

Data sharing & referral systems set up to create a smooth integration between organisations

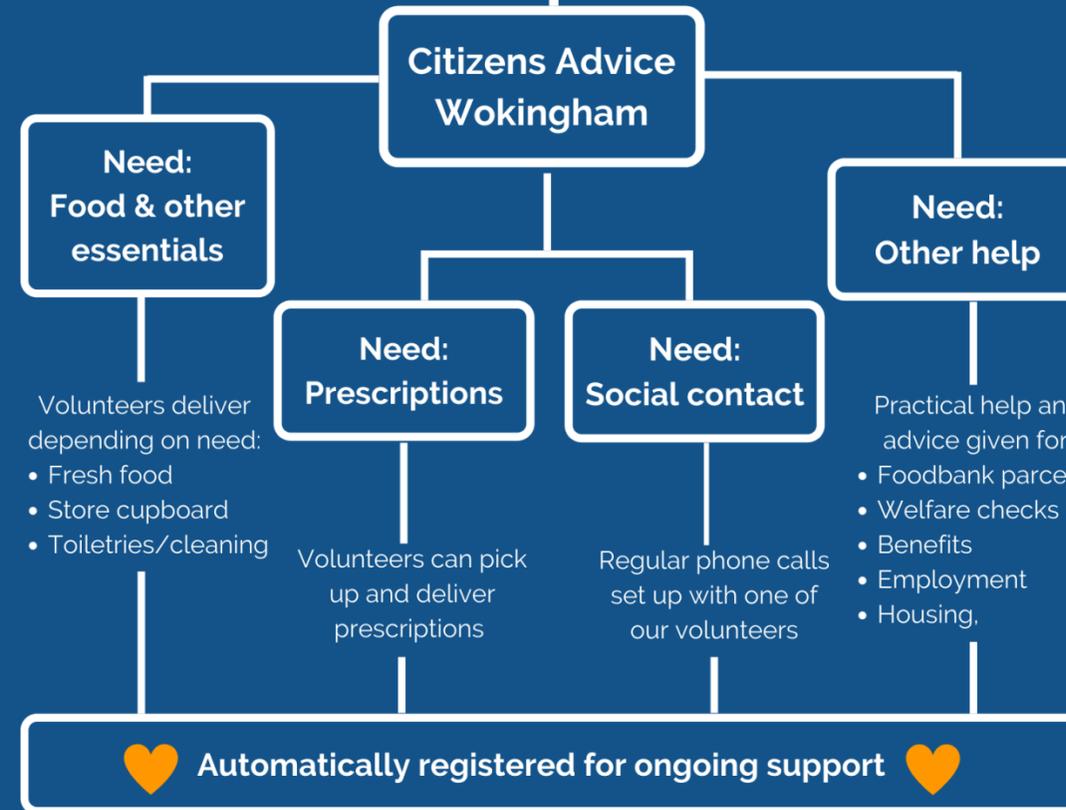
## Do you need support during COVID-19?

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH  
COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

0300 330 1189  
(if prompted enter 0118 978 7258)  
admin@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk



When you contact us, we assess what sort of support you need



\*Not automatically registered for ongoing support

Strong, consistent & regular comms campaign to explain and promote one front door system

Positive working relationships between VCS organisations & WBC that helped develop & adapt the system to meet changing demands

## Can you help?

The Wokingham Borough Community Response needs your help!

**Food & other essentials**

### Drop off locations:

Wokingham Borough Community Hub - Monday to Saturday 8.30 to 3.30  
St Crispin's Leisure Centre, London Rd, Wokingham  
Other locations - Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 10am to 12pm  
Lower Earley Library, Twyford Library, Woodley Library

**Financial donations**

### Just Giving Fundraiser:

Visit the First Days Children's Charity page for the Wokingham Borough Community Response to Covid-19



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## 10 Our Approach – Additional response services & activities

Churches & The Link Visiting Scheme **supporting care homes** (virtual church services, goody bags etc.)

**Mobility project** – WBC OT and Sports & Leisure in partnership with VCS volunteers from The Link & Age UK Berkshire working together to support those residents who had shielded during lockdown to gain mobility and confidence to get outside again

**Supply of PPE** to VCS charities & organisations

54 **Fund Bid Writer** – WBC funded post to Involve. Providing other VCS organisations with expertise and support required to apply for funding

**Goody bags** for residents receiving food parcels (co-ordinated by The Link Visiting Scheme)

# 11 Our Approach – Communications Campaign

- Regular updates & guidance
- Consistent & Clear messages
- Strong branding
- Multiple channels for different audiences (newspaper, leaflets, social media & web)

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Do you want to help during the COVID-19 situation?

Our communities are strong and resilient. There are simple things we can do to help them continue to thrive!

- 1. Check-in on vulnerable family, friends and neighbours.**  
Just helping them with their shopping and checking they have everything they need can make a huge difference. Know someone self-isolating? Call or text them to check that they're ok.
- 2. Volunteer with a local charity.**  
Wokingham Borough Council is working with local charities to provide community support during this difficult time.  
To volunteer, visit the Wokingham Volunteer Centre website at [www.volunteerswokinghamborough.org.uk](http://www.volunteerswokinghamborough.org.uk)

## Do you need support?

If you are in need of help or support, reach out to your community. You are not alone!

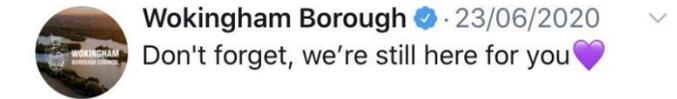
- 1. Call on your family, friends, neighbours or those you trust.**  
Our communities are showing solidarity and community spirit during this difficult time. Most of us will have family, friends or trusted neighbours who can help. Just reach out!
- 2. Call on your local charity.**  
If you are already in contact with a local charity, call them.
- 3. Call on your community & voluntary sector.**  
Wokingham Borough Council is working with local charities to provide a community response for those who don't have support and need advice or practical help. This is not an alternative to the NHS or social services. It is local residents looking after each other.  
Citizens Advice is working with local charities. If you need help, call 0300 330 1109 (if prompted enter 0300 330 1109) or contact them via [admin@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk](mailto:admin@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk)

## WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COVID-19 RESPONSE

631 who have volunteered to help	Latest COVID-19 info direct to 40000 residents	More than 450 prescriptions delivered	1849 food parcels delivered
3500 calls to support vulnerable residents	More than 1000 families & 1500 vulnerable children helped	100% of kerbside waste collections maintained	£27.5m passed on to support local businesses
More than 300,000 PPE items sourced	More than 100 staff redeployed to frontline COVID-19 response roles	100% here for our residents	



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2NQcsLTijw>



The community hub is moving but we're still here to help you get your groceries 🛒

We're also here to support our shielding residents feel safe and confident to go out for some daily exercise 🌳 🚶

Get in touch 📧 [cutt.ly/kumiVrT](https://cutt.ly/kumiVrT)

### Food hub

Our distribution hub is moving from St Cropan to Carling Park to free up facilities for when the school reopens. We will continue to be here to support residents to meet their food needs. The supermarkets have recently come up with some new ways of getting shopping to their customers so that you can access your usual range of items. Some of our local charities also have programmes to help residents with their shopping. Contact us now through the Wokingham Borough Community Response service and we will help you find the way that works best for you.

### Helping everyone move forwards

We understand that this has been a frightening and difficult time for many, many of us. As lockdown measures are eased, so we want to be there to support those who may need some extra help. The guidance can be confusing and with so much information out there, we want to help everyone to get the right help and advice and to feel safe. As lockdown measures begin to lift, Wokingham Borough Council along with partnership organisations such as the NHS and the Voluntary Sector will be working hard to help the vulnerable and previously shielding residents. Many people have had little exercise and have not left their home in nearly three months. This may have led to people losing their mobility and confidence. We want to make sure that shielded residents feel safe and confident to go outside once a day for exercise. This can be with another person from a different household, as long as they stick to government advice for people who are shielding. A team from adult social care, including occupational therapists, voluntary sector specialists and rehabilitation coaches from our sports and...

## 12 Our Approach – A Proactive Response

# Establish

# Review

# Adapt

- Proactive response: March 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 – first action group meeting. Front door & Food hub set up & operational by 19<sup>th</sup> March
- VCS took on specific service delivery roles & process flow developed
- Action group structure & governance established. 3 times a week meetings held

- Impact of central Government directives & guidance discussed, changes required agreed with relevant actions (*e.g. GP & severely vulnerable lists, Defra scheme, National food parcels*)
- Risks & issues identified along with mitigating actions (*e.g. data sharing, funding, volunteer recruitment*)

- Changes in demand monitored & response adapted accordingly (*e.g. re-location of food hub, shopping assistance to replace parcels, using NHS volunteer responders for prescriptions*)

# Impact & Outcomes – Key Statistics

57

<p><b>Prescription collection &amp; delivery</b></p> <p><i>864 prescription referrals</i></p> 	<p><b>Food parcels &amp; shopping advice</b></p> <p><i>4,726 deliveries to 892 households</i></p> 	<p><b>Proactive welfare calls to vulnerable</b></p> <p><i>2,942 people allocated to welfare check volunteers</i></p> 
<p><b>One front door (phone/web/email)</b></p> <p><i>3,274 unique clients</i></p> 	<p><b>Local Community Groups</b></p> <p><i>10 Covid groups live on pathway across borough</i></p> 	<p><b>Home from Hospital service</b></p> <p><i>89 people supported</i></p> 

\* Statistics cover period from 19 March 2020 to 10 August 2020

# 14 Impact & Outcomes – who & how we have helped through the One Front Door

## Issues

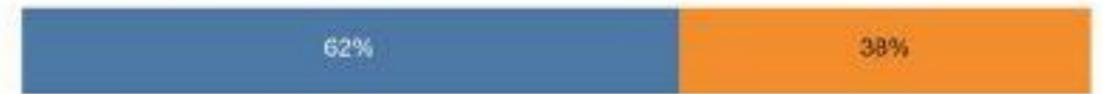
	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	1,073	524
Benefits Universal Credit	620	364
Consumer goods & services	283	211
Debt	672	244
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	92	63
Education	29	20
Employment	803	409
Financial services & capability	138	108
Health & community care	1,722	1,149
Housing	574	341
Immigration & asylum	113	66
Legal	180	136
Other	776	584
Relationships & family	430	256
Tax	62	54
Travel & transport	57	51
Utilities & communications	66	50
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,690</b>	

58

## Channel



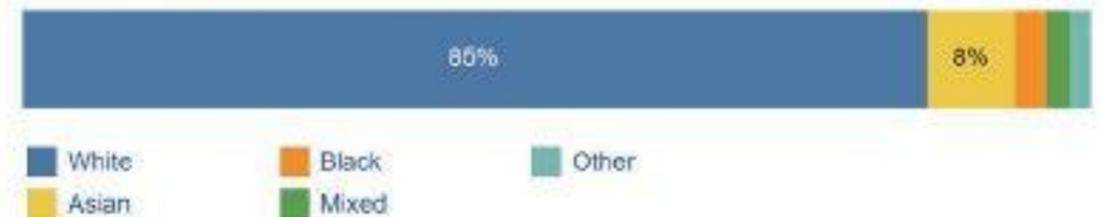
## Gender



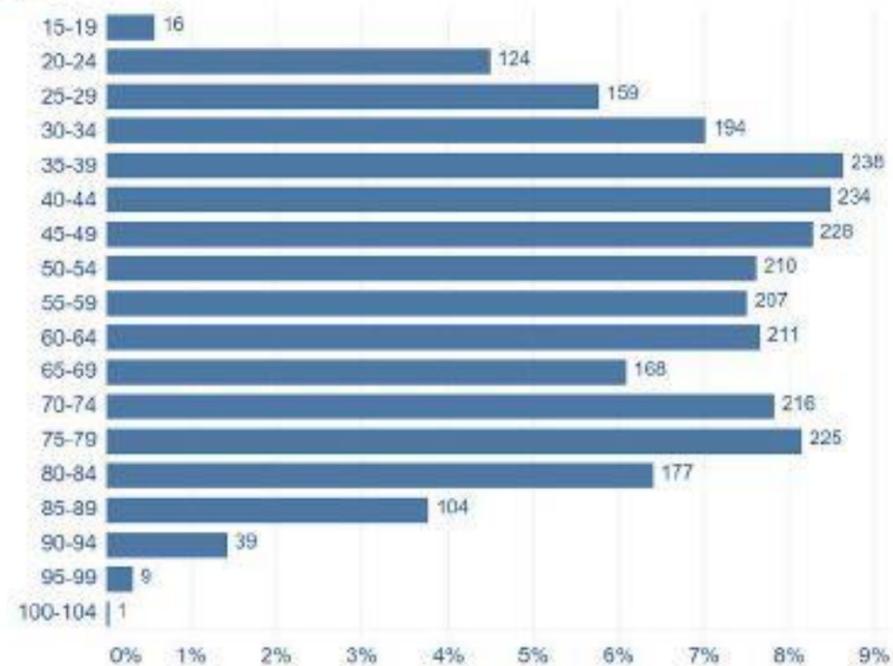
## Disability / Long-term health



## Ethnicity



## Age

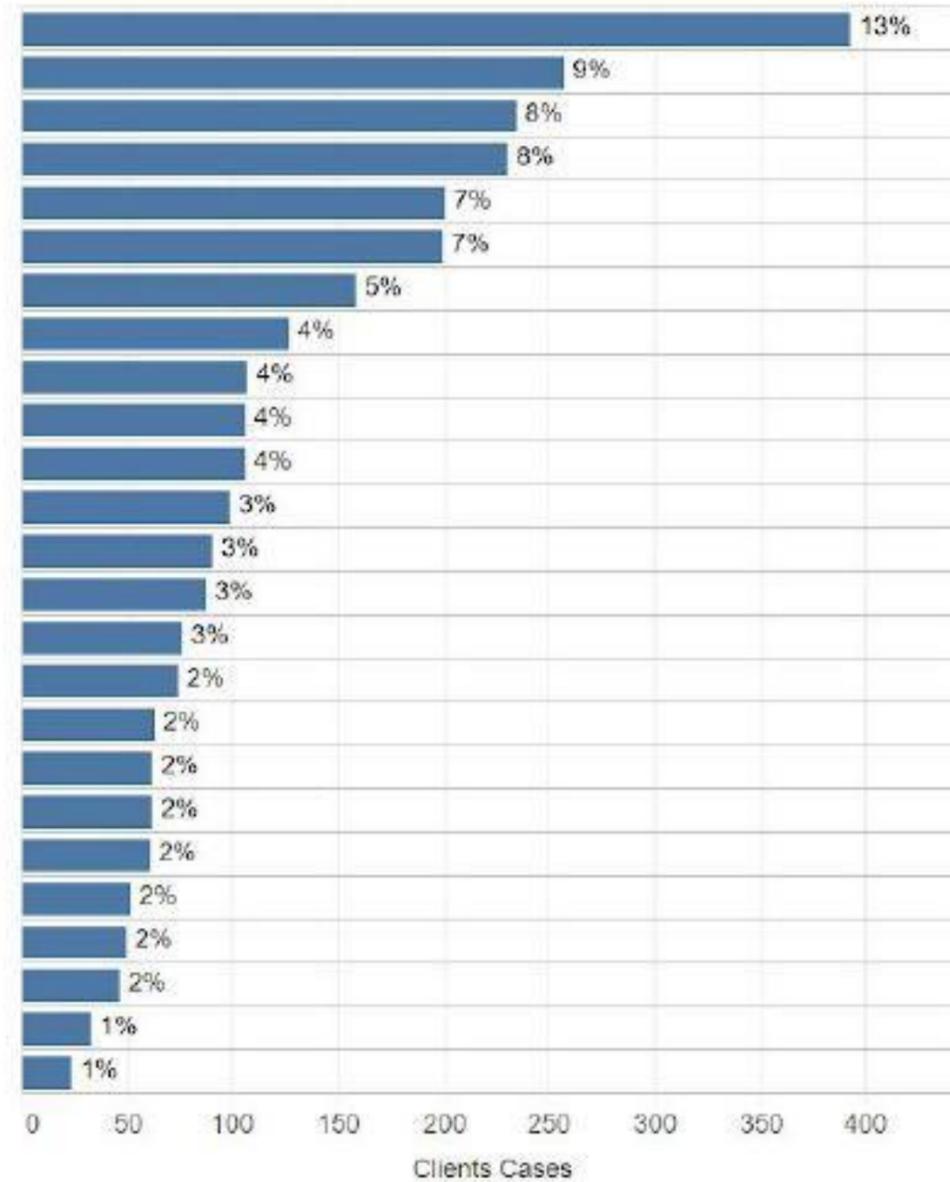


Data provided by Wokingham Citizens Advice from their interim report (1 Jan 2020 – 31 July 2020)

# 15 Impact & Outcomes – who we have helped through the One Front Door (by ward)

59

Ward		
Local Authority Ward	Local Authority	
Norreys	Wokingham	393
Emmbrook	Wokingham	257
Winnersh	Wokingham	234
Evendons	Wokingham	230
Wescott	Wokingham	200
Loddon	Wokingham	199
Bulmershe and Whitegates	Wokingham	158
Shinfield South	Wokingham	126
Maiden Erleigh	Wokingham	107
Finchampstead South	Wokingham	106
Hawkedon	Wokingham	106
Hillside	Wokingham	99
Twyford	Wokingham	90
Wokingham Without	Wokingham	87
Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe	Wokingham	76
Barkham	Wokingham	74
Coronation	Wokingham	63
Arborfield	Wokingham	62
South Lake	Wokingham	62
Finchampstead North	Wokingham	61
Shinfield North	Wokingham	51
Sonning	Wokingham	49
Swallowfield	Wokingham	46
Hurst	Wokingham	33
Charvil	Wokingham	24



Data provided by Wokingham Citizens Advice from their interim report (1 Jan 2020 – 31 July 2020)

## Impact & Outcomes – Positive Feedback 16



**THANK YOU!**

*"The person who called me was lovely. She came over as caring and concerned. When you're having a bad day, someone like that can really help and make a difference."*

*"Thank you all for continuing to help people like me. Over the past 2 weeks it has been the most difficult time so far. My family live so far away, so having help with food provision & medication has been my lifeline."*

*"I was shocked at the help received; it was so good! They were nice people who were really kind and helpful and it was good to receive food in the beginning as we couldn't get a slot".*

*"Everyone has been absolutely excellent and have been really helpful. I was helped to get food, medication and provided with emotional support. Because of that, I have sent a £50 donation to a children's charity."*



## 17 Funding/expenditure summary

Expenditure (area/organisation)	Cost (£'000)
First Days	8
Link	14
CAB	50
Volunteer Centre	6
Food Parcels	100
Sustainability	30
WBC Additional Pay and Overtime	63
Bid Writer	35
Recurring funding for Link	70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>376</b>

## Keys to Success – what worked well



- Strong customer journey - access to multiple VCS organisations & services through one front door
- Cross-organisation working - stronger insight and understanding of how other organisations work
- Flexible & adaptable attitudes
- True partnership approach
- Leadership from WBC & having a decision maker at the table
- Strong structure & governance of action group
- Regular & consistent comms campaign
- Playing to strengths – charities took on service roles that they were best placed to deliver
- Representation of Towns & Parishes
- Links to wider VCS via Involve
- Utilisation of local Covid community groups
- Improved relationships with VCS, providers & our health partners
- Specialist input from WBC teams (Public Health, Localities, data team etc.)

# 19 Keys to Success – Opportunities for the future



## Working towards a common goal

- VCS action group need a common purpose & shared objectives for the future
- Working together in the community as equal partners on joint initiatives
- Supporting opportunities for partnership working with grants and access to funding streams



## Data & Insight

- One central community hub with common systems & shared access to information
- Review how data from central government is sent to VCS Group in the future and how this can be simplified
- Using data to proactively identify & target vulnerable



## Food Hub

- New operating model for the future, offering access to food rather than food parcels
- Potential shared premise for the Foodbank & Food Hub



## One Front Door (Customer journey)

- Reduce gaps in customer support (i.e. mental health, carers, dementia, etc.)
- Clarity on NHS responders future role



## Expanding the VCS Group

- Reach out to other VCS organisations with specialist expertise (i.e. Berkshire Women's Aid, Mental Health charities & Youth support)
- More work with local community groups and keeping in touch through friendship alliance



## VCS Action Group

- Continue regular group meetings chaired by AD as decision maker & reviewed membership to respond to needs within the community
- Core group focussing on themes, with break off sub-groups to focus on targeted issues in the community and feeding back to core group



## March 2020



**Response**

**Recovery**

**Regroup**

VCS Strategy & implementation of VCS hub

Response to crisis

Continued response *(adapted to changes in demand)* with some return to BAU

- Retrospective & lessons learnt
- Planning for second wave
- Future structure & purpose of action group



# 21 The future

## Activity/Services to continue for now

**Front Door** (Citizens Advice) as we anticipate continued demand once shielding finishes (until end September at least)

**The LINK welfare/buddy calls** service to keep in contact with vulnerable residents (via recurrent funding)

**Provision of PPE** equipment for VCS

**Communications** to residents via multiple channels – increased focus on respect for others when outside

**Engagement with Primary Care** to target proactive support for vulnerable residents

**Public Health guidance** to VCS to support service redesign

**Volunteer recruitment drive**

## Immediate future

Significant increase in Services to address Mobility issues and loss of confidence to go outside . (Combination of OT staff, Sport and Leisure staff and trained volunteers)

Increased demand due to financial impact on residents (furlough ending)

Re-orienting the local COVID groups into sustainable local neighbourhood provision

Expand the WBCR Steering group to continue future planning and communication with the VCS

Increase support to VCS to bid for funding (Fund Writer appointed to Involve) and increased liaison with Funding Partners.

Medium term – development of VCS Community hubs

There is a need for a VCS Mental Health response (eg MIND) (discussions underway)

Planning for supporting BAME community in the event of a second wave

**Resident survey responses** – identification of issues & concerns raised by our residents that need addressing/tackling to be fed back to VCS group

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