

## Cabinet

Tuesday 5 May 2020

4.30 pm

Online/Virtual. Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Please contact [constitutional.team@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:constitutional.team@southwark.gov.uk) for a link to the online meeting

## Supplemental Agenda No. 1

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Date: 4 May 2020

<b>Item No.</b> 7.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 5 May 2020	<b>Meeting:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		#SouthwarkTogether: Council response to COVID-19 pandemic	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Councillor Peter John, Leader of the Council	

### **FOREWORD FROM COUNCLLOR PETER JOHN OBE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The word unprecedented has been heavily used in relation to COVID-19, perhaps because it is hard to think of another word that adequately sums up the situation. There is no precedent, certainly in our lifetimes, for our country going into lockdown; for facing a virus that spreads so far and fast with no available vaccine or cure; for losing loved ones in such large numbers and often without the ability to say goodbye. We will look back at this time with disbelief – how could our way of life that we all held so dear have changed so suddenly overnight, and how did we all adapt to it so quickly?

Whilst no-one could ever be fully prepared for such a new and challenging situation, it's reassuring that in Southwark we had done our homework. From the planning and preparation for a pandemic that the council and health partners had done, and our knowledge and experience of managing emergencies; to our values as a council to support our residents and protect the most vulnerable; through to the amazing community spirit and sense of cohesion across our great borough, we had all the building blocks in place to respond to COVID-19.

That's not to say any of this has been easy. I know what a distressing and worrying time this has been for so many residents and businesses, many of whom have been hit hard financially during lockdown. The council is doing all it can to help. To those of you who have lost family members, friends and colleagues I offer my deepest condolences. We will all come together when we can to pay tribute to those lives lost, but for now all I can say is that I am truly sorry for your loss.

I am sure that without the fantastic response of our residents who have listened to and observed the rules by staying at home, and maintaining social distance, we would have lost even more lives. As the weeks pass it becomes increasingly hard to stay at home, but it is so important we do so in order to save lives and protect the NHS, so thank you.

I also want to say a huge thank you to our friends in the Voluntary and Community Sector, who are often the silent backbone of our community, and to the groups of residents, who have worked so brilliantly with us to develop Southwark's Community Hub. Together we have supported thousands of vulnerable residents by organising and delivering food parcels, running errands, offering support, and sometimes just being that friendly voice at the end of a phone. Thank you – you have made a world of difference.

Thank you too to our incredible officers, and staff across the public sector including our wonderful NHS, who have gone above and beyond for the residents of Southwark. People don't always understand what councils do, but the outpouring of gratitude and respect for our care workers, refuse collectors and other frontline workers has been heartening to see.

Of course, the difficult times are not over yet. This report tells the story so far, of what the council, our partners and our community have done to support the people of Southwark, but we know there will be more testing times ahead, and much more to do. Council finances remain in a precarious situation across the country and we will continue to press government to provide the funding we need to deliver for local residents and businesses affected by COVID-19. None of us knows exactly when lockdown will be eased, or what recovery will look like, but we are determined as a council to continue to demand the very best for our residents, and to support all our residents through an uncertain time ahead.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That cabinet:

1. Notes the update on the council's overall response to COVID-19 pandemic, working together with all our communities as part of our #SouthwarkTogether response
2. Thanks residents, staff, partners, volunteers, providers, suppliers and all in our community for their continuing hard work and dedication in supporting our residents through this crisis safely
3. Notes the remarkable response by Southwark residents in staying at home and observing social distancing and lockdown restrictions despite the challenges this brings to daily lives
4. Expresses condolence to all those who have lost loved ones at this time and notes that the humanitarian aspect of this pandemic will take some time to recover from
5. Supports plans to hold an interfaith service at Southwark Cathedral to pay our respects to those who have lost their lives in Southwark due to COVID-19, once the country has come out of lockdown.
6. Notes that the council's work to support local people mentally and emotionally as we work towards recovery will be taken forward through a Humanitarian Assistance Steering Group (HASG), reporting back to Cabinet on progress
7. Agrees to continue to lobby national government to make good on their promise to councils that they would cover the cost of additional council spending required to support people through COVID-19
8. Instructs officers to review the Council Plan and medium term resources strategy in the light of the pandemic's impact on the borough and bring forward, where necessary, updated proposals to Cabinet by September 2020
9. Agrees to revise the Head of the Chief Executive's Office post to provide director level oversight of the council's approach to recovery and renewal
10. Instructs officers to consider the wider policy and resource implications of recovery and its impact on the borough including humanitarian assistance, engagement with communities, wider ways of working; and any review of governance arrangements in the light of these implications.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

11. COVID-19 is hitting our residents, public institutions, businesses and voluntary and community organisations hard. An invisible foe, it has required an unprecedented response; one which has mobilised the resources, skills and good faith of many across the borough to ensure all, especially the most vulnerable, are safe, well and protected.
12. Tragically, people in our communities have left us much too soon. In total 154<sup>1</sup> people in our borough have sadly lost their lives to COVID-19. 72% of these were in hospital, reflecting regional and national trends. The hurt attached to those who have lost loved ones is unimaginable. The humanitarian aspect of the pandemic will take time to recover from and the council, working together with residents and partners, will continue to support individuals and families, both now and into the months and years ahead.
13. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent response has no contemporary forerunner. There is no exact template to work from. This is the operating context in which the council is working tirelessly with residents, mutual aid volunteers and partners across the borough.
14. The purpose of this report is therefore to explain how the council, working with and across our communities, is responding to the pandemic and some of the early key strategic issues emerging. It will also attempt through this and future reports to start to map, against an unclear path, the future steps that the council and borough could take to emerge from the worst pandemic it has faced in modern times.

### A snapshot of Southwark's response

15. Residents, businesses, partners, voluntary and community groups and the council have never faced anything like COVID-19 before in our borough. The support and contribution of all those have made a hugely positive difference for people across our borough during these challenging days. A brief snapshot of our combined response working together as a borough, shows that to date:
  - 10,000 vulnerable people have been called to check they have the support they need
  - 2,500 food packages have been delivered so far to our most vulnerable residents and those at risk, with the capacity to scale up to over 1,000 food packages per week
  - £298,000 has been distributed in community support grant to 106 voluntary or charitable organisations in the first tranche of special hardship funding
  - 2,097 applications for a total of £483,000 of emergency support have been approved to enable food and fuel support for people experiencing particular hardship
  - 176 people who would have otherwise slept rough on our streets have been supported into a temporary home
  - 3,119 businesses have been awarded financial support equating to £46.49million in grants
  - 130+ parks and open spaces kept fully open throughout lockdown.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS recorded data, as at 17 April 2020

## **Understanding the initial impact of COVID-19 on Southwark's residents**

16. Like many across the rest of the country, we are only beginning to understand the short and longer-term impact of COVID-19 in our communities. The most immediate and truly devastating impact is the loss of life, and our condolences go out to the families and individuals who have lost loved ones at this time. The longer term impact of COVID-19 will not be known for months, possibly years.
17. The council, working with local residents and partners will want to understand how as a borough we collectively learn from this horrible pandemic to prepare and safeguard for the future. This will involve groups and organisations across borough boundaries and at a Londonwide and national scale too.
18. Since the start of the pandemic what we know from the national and local picture is:
  - 107,436 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in England, with 23,284 in London, and 1,140 in Southwark of which 154 people have sadly died
  - Nationally, mortality rates among men are more than double that of women, 17% of COVID-19 related deaths are among BAME groups and over half of all COVID-19 related deaths are among people aged over 80 years.
  - The number of people infected with COVID-19 in Southwark, and the number of people we have sadly lost, is comparable to neighbouring boroughs
  - 6,679 shielded individuals are being supported across the borough. These are individuals who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
  - 179% increase in new council tax reduction claims received since 30 March 2020
  - Over 3,000 requests made to the council for housing advice, assistance and support in the fortnight to the end of April 2020.
  - 1,154 unique separate enquiries to our specially designated business support service; this is in addition to the wider financial support from the council to businesses through rate relief and other support grants.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Mobilising and delivering the council's emergency response**

19. Two months ago, at the beginning of March, the UK and London saw a significant uplift in the number of reported cases of individuals with or showing symptoms of COVID-19, or Coronavirus. A pandemic was well underway, with London at the sharp end.
20. Anticipating the pandemic, earlier in the year the council with partners in the wider health community set up a group to oversee and initially monitor the impact of COVID-19, tracking international and national trends. This included working with hospitals on the potential impact on acute care, as well as planning for wider community impacts.
21. As the number of cases of suspected COVID-19 continued to rise across the country, and in London in particular, the council moved quickly in setting up a Borough Emergency Control Centre in early March and activating pandemic planning. Council Gold and Silver emergency management arrangements were immediately put in place to co-ordinate our local response. This also meant the council could more swiftly prioritise resources to those most in need and protect and support residents. Alongside the council, partners in the NHS, police, and voluntary and community sector mobilised their emergency arrangements meaning we could work effectively together to achieve a united partnership response.

22. A communications strategy was implemented by the council, firstly promoting healthy behaviours and then social distancing. The objectives were promoting and reinforcing public health messages, ensuring any resident or business in need knew where to find support, encouraging unity as a borough, celebrating the work of our staff to improve morale and generate good will, and thanking residents for their ongoing compliance and support.
23. Business continuity plans were activated so the council's focus was on the most critical service delivery, developed in line with, and influencing, the approach for London as a whole. Risk assessments were refreshed, with this process kept under review through the response, in line with new and changing guidance from Public Health England. Partners across health, police and community services similarly activated their own business continuity planning processes, focusing on priority services that would ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents during the pandemic.
24. Southwark has a strong and long history of collaborative partnership working across our public, voluntary and community and business sectors. As a borough, we were able to draw on these well-embedded arrangements from the outset of the pandemic with the intelligence, relationships and expertise to target our response at those in greatest need of support whilst simultaneously ensuring universal support was agile, effective and put the safety of residents first. This included working with representatives from across the voluntary and community sector liaison group, the Southwark Business Forum, the health and wellbeing board, the community safety partnership and the safeguarding boards.
25. The council's emergency arrangements (and those of partners), including communications and workforce strategies, were already in place when on 16 March 2020 the government announced a number of lockdown measures. By this stage the council had moved to core critical service delivery in line with the rest of London.
26. Non-critical council services were either minimised or paused to ensure staff and other resources could be focused on the most critical services and those that had to be developed in the light of the pandemic. This included the new Community Hub, designed, developed and implemented from scratch within days to ensure supplies of food and other support could be delivered to those residents at higher risk and in greatest need.
27. At the same time, a significant voluntary support effort, including through mutual aid groups was mobilised across the borough. This included local groups in neighbourhoods, town centres and high streets from south to north, east to west of the borough working together with council teams, councillors, health partners and the wider voluntary and community sector to ensure Southwark was able to support its most vulnerable individuals and families. This included providing mental health and wellbeing support, advice and assistance and ensuring that people were signposted to additional help where they needed it (e.g. to the new Community Hub or into local health, care and welfare support services).
28. The government reviewed lockdown arrangements within a 3-week timescale and on 16 April 2020 a further announcement was made that restrictions and social distancing requirements would remain in place. By this time, Southwark had moved into a managed emergency operation with all critical services operating normally, and with staffing capacity consistently at 80% or above. And over the period of the pandemic, staff have demonstrated remarkable willingness and flexibility in being deployed to new work areas, with 275 employees so far redeployed to pandemic response areas

such as hospital discharge, the community hub and the London Mortality Planning Group. Examples include library staff ensuring the smooth discharge of patients from hospital to their home and repairs teams delivering food to vulnerable residents.

29. As an example of the scale of the local effort, Southwark has over 130 parks and open spaces, all of which have remained open throughout the entire lockdown period. This has been to support healthy exercise, and provide those residents who had no access to gardens of their own the opportunity to make use of the borough's multiple green spaces. The vast majority of residents acted responsibly and fed back appreciation and support for the decision to keep parks and open spaces open.
30. Effective enforcement plans in partnership with police colleagues were activated early in our response to ensure residents observed social distancing requirements. This was supported by an active social media and communications strategy, including signage in parks and open spaces and other 'pinch' points for people exercising, to remind people to exercise responsibly and importantly stay safe, stay home and protect the NHS. Most residents have observed, respected and understood why social distancing was so important when visiting the borough's open spaces and a huge thank you to all.

## Communications

31. As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold in Southwark, the council immediately recognised that communications would be an integral part of our response to reassure and support residents through a very challenging, unprecedented and uncertain period of time.
32. An emergency COVID-19 communications team was created, managed by the Head of External Affairs. A communications strategy, produced, delivered and led by the team was put into immediate effect. The team is continuing to work closely with and support all departments, and has so far:
  - Worked with the web team and departments to create 28 new COVID-specific webpages (as of 24 April 2020) generating over 200,000 webpage visits. Support and information for businesses and employers was the most popular content.
  - Sent eight resident e-newsletters, each to over 100,000 residents, achieving an average open rate of 46% (10-15% higher than standard open rates for Southwark council e-newsletters). Financial support for residents was the most popular content. E-newsletters were our most effective tool to refer people to key web content.
  - Produced 100 social distancing banners for parks and public spaces, a hard-copy information flier for all residents, numerous A3 and A2 posters for various locations around the borough and various adverts for local press.
  - Increased reach and engagement on our organic social media channels in comparison with business as usual social media activity. Twitter impressions increased by 50%, Facebook page engagement increased by 358% and Instagram page engagement increased by 190%. Our most popular content was our thank you message to our bin crews.
  - Achieved 661,844 impressions with a paid-for digital advertising campaign encouraging people to stay at home. 174,273 impressions were for 18-24-year olds, a key demographic focus of the campaign.
  - Sent daily briefings to councillors and MPs.
  - Developed a communication policy to support staff through the death of a colleague, which has been shared with other councils by London Councils and the LGA as an example of best practice.

## Southwark's Community Hub

33. The Community Hub is a joint initiative between the council, voluntary sector organisations and the health service in Southwark. Set up at pace and specifically to respond to the impact of COVID-19, it has been established to support people who are vulnerable or should be shielded from the coronavirus.
34. Around 20,000 people in Southwark are either shielded or have identified as vulnerable. The vast majority of these are getting the support they need from friends, family and through their community including through existing relationships with voluntary sector organisations. The purpose of the hub is to provide support and assistance to those who cannot get support from friends or family or who are isolated. The council had already detailed awareness of those who might be particularly vulnerable, for example those with a care package and those residents contacted regularly by our Southwark Monitoring, Alarm Response and Telecare Team. Staff were proactive in contacting vulnerable individuals to ensure that they had the support they needed.
35. The Community Hub team receive data on shielded individuals from the government and information about who needs support. Self-referrals are also received online, through the contact centre, by email and through referral from the voluntary sector, councillors and others. To date there have been over 1,600 self-referrals into the service, mostly requesting food supplies.
36. Operational daily, 7 days a week, and supported by over 150 individual members of staff from across council services, work from the Community Hub highlights:
  - 10,000 vulnerable people called to check they have the support they need
  - 6,679 shielded individuals identified in Southwark with support and assistance being put in place, including welfare and other support
  - 2,500 food packages boroughwide; with the capacity to deliver over 1,000 food packages per week and if needed increase this to 4,000 should the demand increase (the council has received 53 food packages from government).
  - 100 hot meals a day to vulnerable homeless residents,
  - 300 queries handled per day that are coming in via phone, web or email,
  - Bulk deliveries to Tenant and Resident Associations, Tenant Management Organisations, faith organisations, food banks and others to distribute to vulnerable residents alongside delivery to extra care facilities and hostels.
  - Organised fresh food supplies from New Covent Garden Market and Borough Market.
37. The council is supporting shielded individuals where the government cannot deliver food or where there are specific dietary requirements. Over 1,200 food packages have been delivered to shielded residents. This cannot be broken down by ward at this time, but an approximate split between postal code areas shows that the highest proportion of supplies were received in Peckham and Nunhead (SE15) with 23% of the packages, with Borough and Bermondsey (SE1) receiving 18% and Rotherhithe (SE16) and Walworth (SE17) both receiving 16% each.
38. The Community Hub is an entirely new operation, set up as a direct consequence to the lockdown measures by government and the need to ensure our most vulnerable residents or those shielded have the support they needed whilst having to self-isolate. Therefore the expectation remains that the costs involved in the Hub set up and

operation will be met from additional government funding announced for Southwark to cover the impact of COVID-19. This includes consideration of arrangements (and any associated costs) with voluntary and community organisations working directly on referrals to the hub.

### **Key updates from across all departments**

39. Coronavirus knows no boundaries. All residents and businesses have been affected, whether directly through illness or loss of loved ones, or more indirectly through changes and disruption in daily lives. Council departments therefore needed to react and plan ahead in different ways, at different speeds, with differing priorities and consequential resource demands. This was brought together under the council's emergency scheme arrangements to ensure a 'one council' approach.
40. Lead directors reported daily into Silver/Gold on service impacts and the following section outlines key highlights from the ongoing response across departments. It also gives early consideration of shorter to longer term impacts of COVID-19 on the borough, as part of planning our next steps into recovery and a 'new normal'.

### **Children's and Adults' Services**

41. Children's and Adult Services are supporting some of the most vulnerable residents across the borough, from the very young to older adults at risk and with particular needs, ensuring they remain safe and well during these difficult times. This is the very frontline of delivery in response to the pandemic.
42. And in education, the majority of our schools, often described as the fourth emergency service, have remained open over the last six weeks so that children of key workers and/or those in receipt of social care support have continued access to quality teaching and learning.

### **Adult Social Care**

43. The council did not need to implement Care Act easements which were permitted by Government as we were able to sustain safe services across social care, positioning us well for next steps into service recovery. This will also ease anxiety for vulnerable residents and family carers and reduce concerns for the support that will be available from the council at this time and going forward into the months ahead.
44. Across social care there has been safe and secure delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE) into care providers and to staff so that our residents with some of the most intense needs get the support required during the pandemic. This is despite complexities and issues with PPE supply nationally.
45. Our social care teams from senior management through all levels of service have worked with partner authorities and NHS colleagues across the 6 South East London boroughs to safely manage overall capacity and demand in care homes, and have helped to ensure home care to our most vulnerable residents is stable and safe. We continue to work to ensure the testing of residents and care workers is completed systematically, securely, safely and quickly. National target setting has led to complexity in system design and we continue to prioritise this work to ensure our residents and staff have what they need to continue to undertake their roles effectively.
46. Our Out of Hours Social Work Service have continued to deliver with increased demand. Social Work practice across the care groups is performing well and focused

on contact with our most vulnerable residents in the borough and across the country. Quality Assurance checks are providing reassurance on practice and helping us to share best practice examples and to quickly pick up on areas for management action and service improvement.

47. Our existing care workers staff, despite the pressure and difficult circumstances, have demonstrated again their ability and skill to step up to the challenge and take care of our most vulnerable residents. Their individual commitment combined with the Council's adoption of the ethical care charter in 2013 meant that Southwark care worker staff maintained high morale and thankfully we did not experience staff shortages through the pandemic.
48. The council will continue to work with individuals, families, carers and partners to ensure our care services receive the attention and support, including resources, required from government to ensure those in our care homes are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

#### Education

49. The council's responsibilities around schools and education have been a key focus in our local response. On Wednesday 18 March 2020, all schools were ordered by the government to close by Friday 20 March 2020, with the exception of those schools who were teaching children of key workers and/or those in receipt of social care support.
50. At short notice, education staff worked with parents and schools to ensure that the necessary support and safeguarding was put in place to ensure our young people were able to continue their learning, whether by home schooling or through continuing their learning in school settings. At the start of lockdown, this included many schools sending out lesson plans so that parents and carers could home-school primary children. We have also planned for delivery of laptops (and internet access) for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.
51. In Southwark the majority of schools are open, including one nursery school, 55 primary schools, 17 secondary schools, five special needs schools and one virtual special needs school. Conversely 26 schools are closed, made up of two nursery schools, 19 primary schools, two secondary schools and three special needs schools.
52. The number of families reliant on free school meals is rising. Southwark schools provided local free healthy school meals ahead of any additional support and the scheme supplemented by government. Additionally, some schools ensured that meals were provided for any child that needed them while they waited for the new government voucher scheme to be put in place.

#### Children's Services

53. Lockdown affects all stages of the child protection process: prevention of maltreatment and parenting support, court proceedings for abuse and neglect, placement of children with alternative carers, and multi-agency procedures at the heart of the child protection system. Everyday practices like the 'child centred approach' to safeguarding, which relies on children's' welfare being seen as everyone's business, are fundamentally challenged by the practice of social distancing.
54. Our children's services are working with a heightened level of vigilance throughout lockdown, with children at the edge of care and domestic violence as major concerns.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 the council has prioritised and ensured children's services remain accessible with children's social care staff operating at a heightened level of vigilance with an increase in partnership working. Crucial services remain accessible where teams currently work across Sumner House, Queens Road and East Dulwich Road.

55. The impact of the pandemic and the emergency response has required a significant and urgent shift in practice to protect children at this time. This is against a backdrop of delays in details of announcements by government on the care sector and the local implications of such announcements. The council, working with partners across health, care and others has kept in touch with vulnerable children and families whilst continuing with urgent child protection work, legal proceedings and sensitive work such as adoptions (which the council provides for South London and was subject to amended regulations).

#### Looking ahead

56. Key areas of forward focus across Children and Adults include:
- As an immediate next step, develop and bring together the Humanitarian Assistance Steering Group involving partners and key stakeholders to focus on the broader humanitarian impact of the pandemic on our communities, especially those most vulnerable
  - Prioritising ongoing support in care homes
  - Lobby for extra resources to address the equalities gap that we are experiencing across the care services and ensure commitment from government to mitigate the disproportionate impact on the children who are the most disadvantaged.

#### **Chief Executive's – local economy, regeneration and planning**

57. The Chief Executive's department includes responsibility for the council's overall approach to emergency planning and leadership of our communications strategy and response, which are set out above. The department also includes the local economy team, and regeneration and planning services.
58. Supporting businesses and inclusive growth has been a key priority for the council over the last decade to ensure residents are able to develop new skills, take up new employment and benefit from the wider growth of the borough. There is a risk that COVID-19 and its resultant halting of the economy will unravel these benefits. This is why the council, wanting to help to safeguard residents' livelihoods, has made it a priority to support small local businesses (some 11,500 micro businesses are ineligible from government small business grants) hit hard by COVID-19. For example, and in recognition of their significant role in the local community at this time, the council has offered direct financial assistance to Dulwich Hamlet Football Club and is considering an application for funding from Peckham Levels as part of our overall package of local business support.
59. The work of the local economy team has been prioritised to focus only on business support. The council has received and responded to 1,154 unique enquiries from businesses relating to COVID-19, signposting them to support and assistance. A £2million business hardship fund was put in place at pace, repurposing funds from the Southwark Pioneers Fund, to address in gaps in the government offer to small businesses. 547 applications were received. Grants of between £2.5k and £10k are

being made available to businesses based all across the borough which would otherwise be ineligible for other forms of financial support available.

60. Southwark has a large and ambitious regeneration programme, much of which was suspended or reduced as a result of the pandemic. This had and has a number of impacts across regeneration and planning services, including creating the opportunity to release staff to work on Covid-19 priority response related activity. At the same time, our planning team has continued to work through applications as well as plan for the easing of lockdown measures and its impact on future plans for regeneration and the built environment across the borough. This includes work to support the planning committee taking place on 5 May.
61. Guidance on safe work in the light of the pandemic has been produced by the regeneration team and given out for construction sites borough wide.
62. Our public consultation on the social regeneration charters for different parts of the borough is proceeding using a digital approach and over an extended period. Outcomes from this and other engagement processes will need to be considered in the context of the emerging post COVID-19 policy and resource landscape.
63. The council is responsible for a commercial estate of properties. In the last quarter, rent from the commercial property estate is likely to see a 75% reduction on expectations, which is circa £4.5 million in lost income following most of the council business tenants pausing or ceasing trading and therefore not being able to pay rents and requests for rent holidays and/or financial assistance. Longer term, business failure may result in increased voids, loss of rent revenue and costs of servicing empty commercial properties.
64. A balanced approach is being taken to supporting commercial property tenants through this period. Whilst some businesses are relatively unaffected in trading terms and can continue unsupported, the majority have been impacted. Within our core investment portfolio held solely for yield, we are negotiating rent deferrals and restructuring leases to improve long term outcomes for tenants and the council. The same approach has been adopted across the traditional commercial portfolio (i.e. our smaller shops and other business premises, including voluntary and community sector-occupied premises), with the possibility of further support including rent free periods in exceptional circumstances. Requests for assistance are assessed and ratified by panel decision taking account of ability to trade, business viability, recourse to other financial support and how the tenant's activities contribute in terms of local economy, sense of place and social value

#### Looking ahead

65. COVID-19 will mean profound changes in the economy and economic shape of the borough now and in future, much of which cannot yet be predicted. Using the opportunity of the refresh of the economic wellbeing strategy, early consideration will be given to develop an economic recovery plan with short, medium and long terms goals, focusing on key areas of employment, skills and business support and growth. This will include consideration of the impact on the local apprenticeship offer, where Southwark as a council and borough has been a market leader in recent years transforming the lives of many residents.
66. The local skills strategy and action plan, developed and delivered in partnership with further and higher education providers, local employers and learners, will need

revisiting to ensure the borough is in the best possible place to support industries and organisations most impacted by COVID-19 (such as hospitality and leisure).

67. Future local economic forecasting will be a significant challenge until more is known on the short and longer term impact of lockdown, and its gradual easing, on business viability and growth. The risk of stop/start growth on ensuring an inclusive economy represents a challenge to future plans, including achieving a full employment borough. More specifically, this includes the assessment by companies around payment of the London Living Wage (LLW). The council, working with partners, will continue to prioritise LLW and a fair day's pay for a fair day worked, which will take on greater intensity – and challenge – in a period of economic disruption.
68. The pausing of construction and resultant longer term impact of potential delay of pipeline projects may have consequences on options for major regeneration projects. The council's approach and timing of consultation and engagement on these and other projects will require review, taking account of any broader recovering planning.
69. The longer term impact of COVID-19 on construction and the development industry will also require further consideration. This includes the financial impact on the council associated with potential loss of capital receipts from the sale of land, from reduced New Homes Bonus award and reduced business rates revenue. Recovery planning will need to take account of how the council achieves future delivery of new homes, jobs and the wider economic, social and health benefits of planning and regeneration.

### **Environment and Leisure including Public Health**

70. The Environment and Leisure department, responsible for many of the council's 'universal services' for residents, has taken a leading role in many elements of the council's response. Staff in the Environment and Leisure department have shown great spirit and commitment to continuing to offer our residents excellent services during these exceptional times. This has been exemplified from the initial tasks of promoting good hygiene and responding to local anxiety around the first recorded cases of COVID-19, to the challenges of keeping key services running with a depleted workforce and increased demand, and right through to finding new and virtual ways to deliver much-loved local services during lockdown. This has been particularly challenging in the context of evolving government advice with regards to parks and cemeteries. The next section sets out the main areas of focus for the department in response to the pandemic.

#### **Our Public Health response**

71. The Public Health team has supported the whole council in its response from the very outset, establishing the COVID-19 pandemic committee early, on 6 February 2020, ahead of many other councils. The team engaged quickly with business improvement districts, schools and the voluntary and third sector to support their preparedness. It also established a 24 hour acute health protection on-call service dealing with direct enquiries from care and nursing homes, the public, nurseries and schools.
72. The Public Health team has ensured our guidance and support for staff, residents, businesses and other public sector bodies is grounded in science and based on the most up to date national advice. The team has contributed to the council's arrangements to secure Personal Protective Equipment, led its mental health and wellbeing campaign, and worked closely with the Community Hub to help ensure food security for our residents.

73. Southwark's public health team has also played a key role across London, leading on children's health and screening, and supplying data and knowledge back into Southwark to help inform our response.

#### Maintaining essential services

74. Despite the staffing challenges faced by all employers during the pandemic, the environment teams have maintained a consistent service for residents, including keeping to the regular waste and recycling collection schedule; keeping our streets, estates and parks clean and tidy; and continuing to protect the public with robust enforcement of trading standards, and antisocial behaviour. The highways team has worked with contractors to ensure safety for workers and the public whilst carrying out essential maintenance, and to address public concerns about social distancing. They have also introduced new measures in busy high streets like Rye Lane to widen pavements temporarily, allowing pedestrians more space in which to maintain social distance.
75. Some services have seen new and increased pressures, such as wardens working with the police to monitor social distancing in parks, and our bereavement team who have worked hard and compassionately to ensure families can lay their loved ones to rest at this terrible time, while sadly experiencing a 50-60% increase in demand for burial and cremation services.
76. The parks and cemeteries teams have played a key role in supporting residents to find the balance between staying active and also maintaining social distance. We closed playgrounds and other sporting facilities where social distancing was difficult, but were committed from the outset to keep parks open to ensure our residents, many of whom have no gardens or outdoor space, could get outside for some fresh air and exercise. Cemeteries were initially closed to ensure funerals could operate safely, but on government advice we, along with other councils, reopened our cemeteries to allow families to visit graves or memorials and pay their respects.

#### Adapting services to a virtual world

77. The temporary closure or suspension of services across the leisure portfolio such as libraries, youth centres and leisure centres has been challenging for many residents who rely on these services to keep active, meet others, learn and access services. Staff have worked hard to ensure alternative virtual services were provided where possible. The Stay at Home Library was recently launched to bring a range of educational, fun or healthy activities direct to residents in the comfort of their own homes. The offer ranges from library favourites like Baby Rhyme Time and book clubs, through to local theatre performance and DIY masterclasses.
78. The council has also supported the NHS to repurpose some of our buildings to support the emergency. For example, Canada Water Library, which is closed, is now being used as a temporary blood testing centre.

#### Looking ahead

79. As with many areas of council business, the assumptions that informed our planning must now be reviewed and updated in response to the impact of, and learning from, COVID-19, and the new challenging financial context we will be operating in (as set out in the Finance and Governance section). We will need to consider which services we can continue to deliver in the face of lost income, and how to adapt and streamline our offer to reflect an anticipated smaller budget.

80. Specifically, we will be considering:

- The role of public health in addressing the health inequalities that affect our borough, and which appear from initial data to have played a role in determining which residents have been most affected by the virus. We now have an opportunity to explore the causes and impacts of health inequality through ethnicity or poverty, and based on the outcomes, programmes will need to be reshaped and in some cases end.
- The impact of COVID-19 on the private and voluntary sector providers of some of our leisure and play services, and the changing demands from our residents. This will be particularly relevant for how we shape our leisure and youth services in the future.
- We will need to consider how the climate change agenda has been impacted by COVID-19. Whilst we have seen benefits from lockdown including improved air quality, we do want to move forward at pace with our climate change strategy and action plan, and the consultation that will inform it.
- The future of culture and leisure in Southwark - specifically how we capitalise on the richness of that offer and make it accessible to those least able to access expensive provision, maximising the role of an online offer currently being tested during lockdown.
- Further review the burial strategy and availability of burial plots, as well as delivering on the additional capacity at Camberwell Old Cemetery.

### **Finance and Governance**

81. Alongside continued maintenance of the financial management and governance process, including closing of accounts and other financial accounting services to support all services, the more detailed focus of the department's response to Covid-19 has been across democratic and exchequer services.

#### Democratic services

82. The focus of democratic services has been on ensuring that meetings can move online through the period of lockdown including the first cabinet meeting taking place via MS Teams and subsequent roll out to other committees such as overview and scrutiny committee, a separate meeting of which is planned for 7 May 2020.

#### Exchequer services

83. The council took immediate action at the start of the crisis to suspend all recovery and enforcement action across all key income areas including Council Tax, Business Rates, council rents and home ownership. Furthermore, advice and support was provided to customers experiencing financial hardship. Web-based e-forms were made available for customers to outline individual circumstances so that alternative payment arrangements could be made.

84. The council has been particularly proactive in ensuring businesses, many of which are small and medium size enterprises, were supported at pace through the release of business grants. The council will be reimbursed for the lost business rate income via a Section 31 grant. Highlights include:

- Prior to 1 April 2020, £19.34m in grants were paid to 965 businesses. By 30 April 2020 this position was a total of £46.49m paid to 3,119 businesses.
- From 1 April 2020, the retail rate relief was expanded to include hospitality and leisure businesses where any eligible business could be awarded 100%

business rates relief and will therefore pay no business rates for the financial year 2020/21. As a result, 2,448 eligible businesses were awarded £82.66m on 21 April 2020.

- In addition to the expanded retail rate relief scheme, grants were made available to support eligible businesses through two further schemes where eligible small businesses could receive a grant of £10,000 and those eligible businesses in retail, leisure or hospitality grants of either £10,000 or £25,000.

85. The council put in place a community support grants scheme in early April for voluntary or charitable organisations providing direct support to the community as a result of Covid-19. £390,000 of funding was made available to support local organisations. 106 groups and organisations were awarded £298,000 in the first tranche of funding.

#### Financial hardship and council tax reduction claimants

86. COVID-19 has impacted on individuals in many ways, including creating financial hardship for some of the most vulnerable in our borough. Recognising this, on 18 March 2020 the council put an additional £1.5m in funding to the council's emergency support scheme to enable food and fuel support to be expanded to those individuals experiencing hardship as a direct result of COVID-19. By 30 April 2020 the exchequer services team had received 5,300 calls and 3,128 applications resulting in 2,097 awards, totalling £483,000 in direct support.
87. The council has also revised its hardship policy to further assist residents experiencing financial difficulty in paying Council Tax and to distribute the £3.4m provided through government grant. The government grant was designed to support "economically vulnerable people and households" and is administered by local councils, largely by providing additional discounts of up to an additional £150 on the Council Tax bills for those receiving working-age council tax support. There are however additional pressures being faced including significant increases in Council Tax reduction claims which is putting the council under additional financial pressures. This is demonstrated by like for like comparisons of council tax reduction claims prior to and during COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, Southwark received on average 306 claims per week. In the period from 30 March 2020, 808 claims per week have been received.
88. In a further indication of the financial stress that individuals are beginning to face, since 6 April 2020 the Council has received 1,000 notifications from the Department of Work and Pensions requesting rent information for Council tenants; this provides us with a clear indicator of the rising levels of Universal Credit claims amongst our tenants.

#### Additional grant from government in response to Covid-19

89. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has made a series of ongoing policy announcements, initially at the March 2020 Budget, and then over the last few weeks. A range of new funding streams have accompanied those announcements including emergency funding support, funds that local authorities are able to use for specific purposes (e.g. the hardship fund), funds that councils have been asked to administer (e.g. business grants and homelessness) and changes to existing funding streams (e.g. business rate reliefs). Measures have also been announced to support council's cash flows (which are not additional funding) such as early payment of social care grants and deferring business rate payments to government.
90. Emergency Funding (£19.9m). On 19 March the government announced that £1.6bn would be made available to councils to support costs incurred by councils in their

response to the pandemic. Southwark's allocation equated to £11.1m. The purpose of this funding is to cover the increased demand for adult social care, extra demand and higher business-as-usual costs, particularly in children's social care and in supporting a local response to homelessness and rough-sleeping. Further, on the 18 April, the Government announced an additional £1.6bn of funding to local councils. This time Southwark's allocation equated to £8.8m, all of which was not ring-fenced, meaning the council can determine how best to allocate and spend it.

#### Looking ahead

91. The government has a commitment to funding the full cost of the pandemic and has requested high-level projections of costs of the ongoing local response from local councils. Officers have undertaken initial work to estimate these additional costs. This work highlights specifically that savings in 2020-21 are unlikely to be met; significant (and sometimes still as yet unknown) additional expenditure will be incurred; and expected income will be lost.
92. Initial estimates, which are heavily caveated due to the uncertainty attached to the likely duration of the crisis and the pace of any subsequent recovery, indicate a general fund shortfall of circa £45m. It is unclear at this stage whether and how further funding will be made available and how this will be designed to reflect the individual circumstances and financial losses at an authority level. Without additional government support it is highly likely that the council will overspend its agreed 2020-21 budget, with a significant negative impact on reserve levels.

### **Housing and Modernisation**

#### Homelessness

93. Housing solutions, and services supporting the homeless and rough sleepers, have been at the sharp end of the local response, supporting some of the most vulnerable and at risk individuals during the pandemic and lockdown.
94. Southwark has seen a large increase in rough sleepers during lockdown, believed in part to be due to the loss of casual work, and the service has worked at pace to get people off the streets and into accommodation. At the start of March there were 25 people sleeping rough on the streets of Southwark. Since then we have arranged contained accommodation for over 176 people. Our outreach teams have achieved this by visiting all rough sleepers and arranging same day accommodation for them as well as food and other essential supplies where needed. This has included support for the 69% of rough sleepers who are not entitled to claim welfare benefits.
95. Homelessness is not limited to those we see on our streets, and we have worked to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation with shared kitchens and bathrooms; responded to an additional 3,000 calls for housing advice in a fortnight; adjusted our working practices during lockdown to offer a full homeless service remotely using video calls; and continued to prioritise the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse at home.
96. To support residents living in accommodation with shared facilities, which makes social distancing challenging, the council identified 80 homes in three of the Ledbury towers that can be used to house those who are homeless. These flats were empty while residents worked with the council to decide the future of the blocks, but have been brought back into use as a temporary measure during the emergency. The

homes are safe because of the works that have been undertaken, and the 24/7 waking watch carried out by fire wardens.

#### Housing

97. Some of our most vulnerable residents live in sheltered and extra care homes and we have been in daily contact with them to ensure we can help them with anything, including regular food deliveries where needed. We have also contacted the 7,500 people known to be vulnerable including all tenants aged over 70 and those with longstanding mental health needs or disabilities. Those who may need help with food and medicine supplies have been offered support and where necessary have been signposted to the Community Hub where they received further support. Remote contact has been used wherever possible; where needed, we have risk assessed and carried out safe door-knocking.
98. The Contact Centre manages the direct line in the Community Hub, and is operating seven days a week responding to calls about issues including; food worries, prescription pick up, lack of money and general advice about the virus. The Southwark Monitoring Alarm Response Team (SMART) is in touch with all 2,512 clients on their list and the service has also taken responsibility for contacting those clients on the shielded list to make additional welfare calls.
99. The safety of our residents remains an absolute priority for the council during lockdown and we have continued to deliver emergency and urgent repairs to council homes; a focused Fire Risk Assessment programme in line with industry guidance; critical fire and other safety inspections in our blocks and estates, and gas safety checks which are 100% up to date.
100. The demand for high quality homes at council rent is unlikely to diminish after COVID-19 and so, where safely possible, the council has endeavoured to work with contractors to keep new homes sites and major works projects running.
101. For new homes projects where the council is lead client, every construction site was reviewed following lockdown and where it was safe to do so, work continued with adaptations to adhere to social distancing regulations and other health and safety requirements as set by Public Health England. Where it was judged not safe to work (e.g. in that social distancing measures could not be safely adopted), contractors have been permitted to pause work without penalty.
102. The council is also monitoring the availability of materials and are in regular contact with our contractors to ensure supply chains are resilient, and we are prepared for any increase in works or repairs when we come out of lockdown.
103. We have continued to work with our Tenant and Resident Associations who have been playing a key role in the community, including offering them a rent holiday for community halls.

#### Registrars and Coroners

104. Our Registrars service has responded to the sad increase in requests for death registrations and adjusted the service to keep residents and staff safe by moving to primarily telephone registrations. The team has also worked closely with other councils to ensure we have sufficient mortuary capacity to meet need following the increase in deaths across London.

105. The Coroner's service is supporting the Senior Coroner and although a backlog of cases is building up due to challenges faced by all councils in moving to virtual coroner arrangements, it is hoped that hearings will resume next month.

#### Community Safety

106. General Crime. Although antisocial behaviour related incidents have increased, overall the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have seen a significant reduction in total notifiable offences in London since lockdown compared to the same period in 2019. This reduction has been mirrored in Southwark. Despite the general decrease, there remain real concerns around the impact of lockdown on those experiencing domestic abuse and wider violence against women and girls, along with fraud and online harm.
107. Domestic Abuse. Since the beginning of lockdown, MPS' recorded incidents of domestic abuse in London saw an increase of +9% on last year as reported on 25 April 2020. In Southwark the number of offences involving violence initially saw a decrease of 25 offences in March 2020 compared to March 2019. April's data is not yet available, however the number of offences involving violence has since increased when compared to April last year.
108. Referrals to the council's commissioned domestic abuse service (Southwark Advocacy Support Service) saw a decrease in the first few weeks with the new lockdown measures making it more difficult for survivors who live with the perpetrator to make safe contact with services. The council has used its communications channels and networks to raise awareness of how residents can access support or report concerns both locally and nationally, including through the Community Hub.
109. As lockdown has progressed, referral levels have increased to similar levels as the same period last year, however proportionally we are seeing a significant increase in the number of high risk referrals (serious risk of harm) requiring advocacy support. Between 1 April 2020 and 20 April 2020, 100 high risk cases were received compared to 46 for the same period last year. To help ensure we have sufficient resources in place to support those affected, the council has agreed to fund an additional Independent Domestic Violence Advocate for a period of 6 months, and has plans to increase promotion of the service to hard to reach residents.
110. Serious Youth Violence & Support for Young People. Despite the reduction in youth violence and knife crime in Southwark since the lockdown, there remains considerable concern about the impact felt by our young people, both under the current conditions and in planning for when these restrictions are relaxed. A number of council preventative and targeted programmes continue to support our young people and their families remotely. £20,000 has been awarded to two projects from phase 1 of the Positive Futures Programme to enable young people most at risk to access support through music and the creative arts.

#### Information Technology

111. The demands on our IT systems and staff have been considerable as we have moved as a council from a predominantly office-based workforce to the majority of staff working remotely. 4,500 Microsoft Teams licences were deployed to enable staff to hold virtual meetings. Microsoft Teams usage over the last five weeks shows over 4,218 Online Meetings held, 14,307 Teams Chat messages and 11,130 Audio Calls made. Virtual training sessions have supported over 200 members of staff in the use of MS Teams in addition to written guidance.

112. Modernise teams have developed tools to support remote working including: setting up a safe workstation; supporting mental wellbeing; maintaining team communications and cohesion; running effective virtual meetings; and maintaining good information governance practice.
113. Members services and the constitutional team have been given dedicated support to continue operation of the council's democratic function through remote committee meetings and the country's first ever virtual licensing sub-committee meeting.

#### Organisation Transformation

114. In order to help manage the increased pressure on teams supporting residents through the emergency, it was necessary to redeploy staff from other non-essential services. A skills audit received 785 responses which has meant individuals can be effectively matched to priority critical service needs.
115. The team also launched additional online learning tools to better support staff working remotely through this prolonged period. During the period of lockdown, 4,861 members of staff have logged in to My Learning Source to access information and learning materials and nearly 500 e-learning courses have been completed.
116. Working in partnership with Hitachi and Microsoft, we also rapidly implemented the new Shielded Persons Customer Relationship Management platform solution to support the Community Hub.

#### Facilities Management

117. The facilities management team has continued to provide security, cleaning and management of our office estate including appropriate health and safety measures in line with Public Health England guidance (recognising the majority of staff are working from home). There has been ongoing work to ensure that where council buildings remain open by exception for essential work, social distancing and good hygiene support and information are in place.

#### Human Resources (HR)

118. There has been an incredible response to the emergency by the Southwark workforce. Resilience across teams has been strong throughout the six-week period since lockdown, with a peak of just 3% COVID-19 related absence at the end of March. During the early stages, 2,394 colleagues were issued with travel permission letters confirming their need to continue carrying out critical front-line work across the borough, while those colleagues who can work from home have followed government advice by working remotely and have adapted to new ways of working using new technology rolled out at pace.
119. Emergency deployment will remain in place as we continue to support those shielding and manage increased demand in areas such as homelessness support and financial relief. Longer term workforce needs will form a key part of recovery planning once redeployees start to return to their original roles; support for staff mental health and wellbeing will be needed for an extended period.
120. The HR team has worked closely with Communications and Public Health teams to ensure staff have access to the latest guidance on a dedicated section of the intranet. This includes government guidance, protocols agreed with Trade Union colleagues on

issues like death in service and domestic abuse, and local guidance on issues such as health and wellbeing and performance management.

121. HR has also supported managers dealing with complex COVID-19 workforce issues, including more vulnerable staff groups, those stranded abroad and bereavement support, and has offered specific advice on how to support those who feel isolated or anxious.
122. Weekly briefings are taking place between Trade Union colleagues and the designated Gold and other officers to allow regular discussions on workforce matters. This has ensured a clear escalation route on matters of concern and has enabled quick decisions to be taken on Southwark's pandemic response as it affects our staff, including our application of government guidance. Officers are grateful for the constructive discussions during these challenging times.

#### Looking ahead

123. Across the housing and modernise group of services:
  - We will be doing some detailed analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on our communities, but we know anecdotally that for many residents, the impact of the housing crisis will be felt even more keenly, as the financial impact of COVID-19 continues to reduce the incomes of many households.
  - We are planning for an increased demand for services in the context of a more challenging financial situation for ourselves, our partners, and our contractors, and are working on a specific plan to support rough sleepers once temporary arrangements, such as the provision of hotel accommodation by the GLA, is withdrawn.
  - We will adapt and review our partnership approach to community safety to reflect the changing needs of young people and families. This will include consideration of a wider virtual support package for young people over the coming weeks and through the summer.
  - As soon as it is safe to do so we will also increase homebuilding as we work towards our target to build 11,000 new council homes.
  - We have also begun to consider the learning opportunity and challenges presented by the incredibly swift shift to significant levels of remote working, and what this means for our office estate and working patterns of staff, and the way we deliver services to residents in the future. This work will continue in the coming weeks.

#### **Next steps - into recovery and renewal**

124. There will be a need for some while to continue the emergency arrangements that have been in place during the response phase. These will include the coordination and reporting roles into the London Resilience arrangements (regional and sub regional) through the BECC and Silver/Gold. However, the reporting requirements have reduced since the start of the emergency two months ago and although it is necessary to maintain those arrangements for mostly external purposes it is also now right and appropriate that we focus resources on the recovery and renewal phase. This includes using our usual democratic and management arrangements to navigate through the easing of lockdown arrangements which we know may take many months, and beyond.

125. The plans for the next phase of response to this emergency need urgent coordination at a senior level. The role of Silver in the Council has been undertaken throughout by the Head of the Chief Executive's Office, with respite cover being provided by other directors.
126. In order to ensure a sustained and co-ordinated approach to the ongoing response and recovery planning, it is proposed to enhance the responsibilities of the existing head of the chief executive's office position to provide director level oversight as Director of Response and Renewal. This post will continue to report to the chief executive and will retain these responsibilities for as long as is deemed necessary. The Head of Chief Executive's Office current role is grade 16 and the revised role will be evaluated in accordance with the council's policy using the Hay job evaluation framework. This post will enable a one-council approach to be adopted across all council departments, and with partners, and at a level of seniority, reflecting the importance of the recovery and renewal phase.
127. The council, working with partners, will need to develop and potentially commission research to inform the future stages of the recovery and renewal from COVID-19 on our borough. The priorities for this work will be informed through the work being undertaken across all departments identified earlier in this report. Future reports will be brought to Cabinet as appropriate.
128. Taken the issues above together and looking ahead to the council cycle of meetings and business, the table below sets out some key next steps.

Table 1. Following on from COVID-19 response; key council planning milestones

<b>Date</b>	<b>Planning Milestone</b>
June	Financial Revenue and capital outturn report to Cabinet in June
July	Budget remit report
September	Review of Council Plan and Medium Term Resources Strategy
October	Budget challenge and review process

### **Policy implications**

129. The Council Plan 2018-22 sets out the overall policy framework. This plan describes the commitments, measures and milestones to achieve the Council vision of a fairer future for all. It was adopted by Council Assembly in November 2018 and provides a council wide plan for delivery across all services to 2022. In the light of the issues raised in this report, the plan will require review and refresh taking account of the broader policy and financial landscape emerging through the coming weeks and as local and national recovery planning commences and is implemented.

### **Resource implications**

130. The council's financial outturn for 2019/20 reports a balanced budget after the use of contingency. The move to the emergency arrangements and the impact of Covid-19 took effort towards the end of the financial year 2019/20 with early indications of financial stress on major service contracts as leisure and construction, income collection (such as council tax, business rates due to business closures) and welfare support services. Furthermore, capital programme delivery and receipts slowed in March. Details of the impact across services is set out in the departmental sections above, including financial impact which is also highlighted in the finance and governance section above.

131. The council has had to respond quickly at unprecedented speed to the impact of Covid-19 on our borough and its communities. Announcements from government on new funding will require further analysis. Further detail will be set out in both the revenue and capital outturn report to Cabinet in June and the budget remit report in July. Officers will also need to consider the impact on the capital programme, both in terms of what has been lost and delayed and what continues to be affordable in the short and longer term.

### **Community impact statement**

132. COVID-19 continues to have a unique and unprecedented impact on our residents, without modern parallel or precedent. As this report, and the issues raised within it, has demonstrated that the full impact on the borough cannot yet be known. This will become clearer in the months ahead. Some impacts may not be clear for some years.
133. The very initial financial impact on the Council has been described in earlier sections of this report. As a more detailed picture emerges and is reported to Cabinet in the coming months a review of the Council Plan and the broader medium term resources strategy will become paramount. This review will need to anticipate, in as far as possible, the wider community impacts on our residents and the borough as a whole.
134. The wider social, environmental and economic impact on residents and the borough will likely be significant. In considering, planning ahead for and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on our borough the council, working with partners, will undertake the necessary work to more fully understand any specific implications on a particular group or groups of individuals in our community. The Public Sector Equality Duty will be taken into account when considering any changes to policy arising from the impact of COVID-19 on Southwark. This will include identification of any vulnerable groups and individuals who may be in particular need of targeted support.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

#### **Director of Law and Democracy**

135. The director of law and democracy notes the 10 recommendations; under part 3 of the council's constitution, these are decisions that cabinet is empowered to take.
136. The council has the power to do anything that an individual may do (Localism Act 2011). Further, the council may incur expenditure where this is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the exercise of its functions.
137. The director of law and democracy notes that the council has had additional duties placed on it by way of the regulations in response to COVID-19 pandemic
138. The director of law and democracy notes the comments in paragraph 18 on the effect of COVID-19 and the disproportionate effect on certain groups. The director of law and democracy notes paragraph 134 and reminds cabinet that the council is subject to the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires the council, in the exercise of all its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

139. This duty is a continuing one.

### **Strategic Director of Finance and Governance**

140. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes that the council has had to respond at unprecedented speed to the impact of COVID-19 and the significant implications for the Council's services and the considerable financial implications arising.
141. As set out in the report, the financial implications of COVID-19 and announcements from government on new funding will require substantial further analysis. More detail will be set out in both the revenue and capital outturn report to Cabinet in June and the budget remit report in July.
142. It is also noted that the impact on the capital programme, both in terms of what has been lost and delayed, will also need to be considered together with what continues to be affordable in the short and longer term.
143. It is acknowledged that the costs of the pandemic, in terms of additional burdens, lost income and budget savings that will no longer be achieved, will greatly exceed the resources the government has so far announced. We will need to continue to make the case to the Government that ministers keep their promise and not place the financial burden of responding to this crisis on local authorities and their residents.
144. The strategic director of finance and governance also notes the importance of good governance and accountability to facilitate control of COVID-19 spending during this crisis, and that the finance team will monitor and track COVID-19 related spend.

### **REASONS FOR LATENESS**

145. The report is late so officers can take account of the most up to date information pertaining to the national, London wide and local response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **REASONS FOR URGENCY**

146. The report is urgent so Cabinet can agree and put in place the necessary next steps on policy and resource direction for the Council with regards the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the borough.

### **APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
None	

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
None	n/a	n/a

## AUDIT TRAIL

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<b>Report Authors</b>	Stephen Gaskell, Council Silver for COVID-19 Louise Neilan, Head of External Affairs	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	4 May 2020	
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<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		4 May 2020

**CABINET AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)****MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20**

**NOTE:** Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to  
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