

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 September 2020	Decision Taker: Cabinet
Report title:		Community Hub - supporting the needs of the most vulnerable	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Cabinet Member for Housing & Modernisation	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR KIERON WILLIAMS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND MODERNISATION

When the Covid-19 pandemic reached the UK it became immediately clear that if we were to offer the right kind of support, across all of our communities, we would need to act quickly, creating an entirely new support network from the ground up. Within days we launched the Southwark Community Hub, bringing together our council, NHS, voluntary and private sectors and thousands of volunteers to get support to those who needed it most.

The Hub went on to deliver support to over 10,000 people. We have delivered over 20,000 food parcels, supported health partners in delivering much needed medicines, and signposted residents to the welfare and financial support they needed. It has been an incredible collective response.

Now that the borough is cautiously moving out of lockdown, we have seen the demand for the Hub's primary services reduce significantly. Therefore we established a Review Group to explore the future of the Hub, and how we capture the benefits of the networks it established into the longer term. The Review heard evidence from the council, voluntary organisations, NHS, mutual-aid groups, faith organisations and many others, including testimony on how this partnership has benefited Southwark on a fundamental level.

I am so grateful to all our partner organisations, charities and volunteers who have contributed to the future of the Community Hub. This report outlines our intention to transform the Hub into the Southwark Community Support Alliance, not just to offer emergency support, but to achieve a long term step change in the way we support our community together. I look forward to taking this work forward over the coming years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That cabinet:

1. Notes the considerable efforts from all involved in the Community Hub in the provision of support to the most vulnerable in the community during the worst impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Recognises the significant contribution of the voluntary and community sector in the localised provision of support networks within Southwark and supports the work being undertaken to build on the existing and future network.

3. Welcomes the outcomes from the review into the future of the Community Hub and the considerable impact from the contributors in steering the recommendations in this report.
4. Agrees to the approach to ensuring a managed transition for people supported by the Covid-19 Community Hub, stepping down support where it is no longer needed and ensuring people who need ongoing assistance are matched with the appropriate support. This work will continue between now and December 2020.
5. Agrees the Covid-19 community support plan that sets out the emergency operating model in the event of a further spike in Covid-19 or a further lockdown.
6. Instructs officers to test new ways of providing housing, employment, skills, money, social care and immigration support in local communities, including testing how support from established public and voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers can be made accessible in partnership with local community 'anchor' organisations rooted in each part of the borough.
7. Instructs officers to bring a further report back to cabinet in October 2020 that sets out a more detailed plan for implementation of the council's response to the recommendations of the review working group.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

8. On 16 June 2020 cabinet recognised and agreed to continue to support the significant efforts of the Community Hub in assisting the most vulnerable residents during the worst impact of the pandemic.
9. Cabinet requested that a further report on the learning to date and longer term approach be brought back to cabinet for agreement in September 2020.
10. The Southwark Community Hub was set up in response to the pandemic and resulting lockdown to provide support for vulnerable residents, including social support and access to essential food and other essential supplies. Initially a local authority initiative responding to a government directive, in Southwark the Community Hub quickly evolved to become a joint initiative between the council, VCS and health providers.
11. This change came as a result of a recognition of the emerging scale of the crisis and the requirement to concentrate and coordinate resources to ensure that appropriate support could be provided to those most in need.
12. Through this partnership the Southwark Community Hub has delivered significantly more than the basic offer proposed by central government.
13. Support has been provided to three core groups:
 - Shielded residents, including interim deliveries while the government deliveries were put in place
 - Residents voluntarily shielding or in a group requiring strict social distancing who require support with essential food and other social support
 - Residents vulnerable or food insecure because of Covid-19, including loss of income or requiring additional social support

14. Operating under a steering group with representatives from the council, VCS and local health service, and a range of smaller cross-sector working groups, over the period of lockdown the Community Hub has developed a range of core offers as set out below.

Borough wide point of access

15. A Covid-19 emergency phone line and email inbox was provided and staffed by the council, offering a borough wide point of contact for vulnerable residents to self-refer for support or to make a referral on behalf of friends or family. Importantly this has given access to a full range of support provided by the VCS, council, health and business partners. As well as providing clarity of access for residents this shouldered the main burden of assessment and triage, relieving pressure of dealing with new inward referrals from local VCS providers, many of whom were working at capacity in the early stages of lockdown to adapt existing provision or to contact and support existing services users.

Triage and case-management function

16. Wellbeing and assessment scripts were developed for council call handlers alongside partners in the VCS and health service for use on all self-referrals and wellbeing calls (see below). Collecting contact information and assessing immediate support needs, these joint wellbeing assessments ensured that the most critical information was gathered by the council and partners for any onward referrals. Individual case-management support was offered by relevant teams for the most complex cases.

Proactive wellbeing calls

17. Outward wellbeing calls were made to all shielded residents. This was supplemented by efforts of partners to contact existing service users and share and rationalise lists of those in receipt of support where appropriate and safe to do so.

Food deliveries

18. Provision of food parcels has been one of the main focal points of the Community Hub, although by no means the limit of the offer (see below). Broadly, food parcels have been arranged through two means:
 - Direct from the council - over 20,000 food parcels have been delivered by the council directly to residents. Southwark Building Services staff have sorted and delivered food packages to residents on the council delivery list. These packages have included non-food and non-perishable goods purchased wholesale, supplemented by two donated Fareshare deliveries per week (150 parcels) and fresh produce sourced from New Covent Garden and Borough Markets.
 - Distributed through neighbourhood food hubs - food deliveries also worked through a network of neighbourhood food hubs, located across the borough: Pecan, Pembroke House, Albrighton Community Centre, Central Southwark Community Hub, St George the Martyr, Time and Talents, Paxton Green and Lewington.
19. These neighbourhood hubs all stepped forward to offer additional support through the crisis and have developed delivery and collection models to distribute food parcels to local residents. The council has provided funding, logistics and supply support to these hubs based on local needs and capacity. Individual hubs have also leveraged their

own resources and external funding to grow and develop activity, often significantly. The neighbourhood hubs have also been bolstered considerably by the efforts of the local private sector, as businesses including Hubbub, Fooditude and Bermondsey Employment Skills and Training have pivoted to provide access to equipment or cooked meals to supplement food parcels.

Medical support needs

20. The partners worked with the NHS, GP Federations and local pharmacies to support the delivery of prescriptions to shielded and vulnerable residents. Should there be further lockdowns then this service will be scaled up again.

Non-medical needs

21. Beyond immediate food and medical requests, the Community Hub has also retained a focus on social and wider support needs, including telephone befriending and access to debt and welfare advice. Although many activities and services have had to close or adapt through the crisis, an up-to-date view of service availability and capacity has been developed through regular surveys of the sector by Community Southwark. As services have begun to re-open, or new activities emerge – such as those addressing digital inclusion through the provision of refurbished tablets and smartphones – these have been swiftly added to the new referral database.

Referral and reporting system

22. Establishing quick channels of communication VCS and external partners have been critical to the operations of the hub, ensuring that residents can access the support that they require close to home. With central triage and assessment functions carried out at the centre through the single point of access, a simple and quick means of making outwards referrals and linking residents to neighbourhood food hubs or other local means of support was required.
23. Working closely with Pembroke House and Community Southwark a new system for making outward referrals was put in place rapidly using readily available software (Airtable). This has streamlined the process for outwards referrals from the hub to local providers and offers a platform to track and report on these referrals in real-time, including real-time updates on local service capacities. Created quickly at the outset of the problem this system provided a test-case for how appropriate use of software and technology could help with the development of services, including by identifying where there are gaps in provision that need to be filled.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

24. In response to the pandemic partners in Southwark established Community Hub arrangements to support local people through the pandemic.
25. Feedback on this work from partners and beneficiaries has been very positive, with many people reporting a leap forward in collaborative working across the council, VCS, and NHS. This review has considered how we can build on the success of this work. It sets out recommendations on the best ways to continue to support our community through the pandemic whilst also maximising the long-term legacy of this work for the people of our borough.
26. During July and August, the Review Group considered evidence and feedback from residents and partners. The recommendations are intended guide the work of the

council, voluntary and community sector, NHS and wider partners and funders from September 2020 onwards.

27. The speed and scale of the partnership-working involved in the Community Hub response to Covid-19 has been unprecedented. Between the Council, VCS and health partners we have established a borough wide front-door for vulnerable residents, a network of neighbourhood distribution centres, new cross-sector referrals routes and data-sets.
28. In addition to this work on the Community Hub, across the borough a new wave of residents have responded to the pandemic by offering support locally, whether through traditional volunteering routes or by establishing street-based mutual aid groups, and a swathe of established faith, community and tenants and residents groups have stepped forward to help those particularly in need.
29. In many ways, we have achieved more together in the past five months than we have in recent years. We now have the opportunity to build on the successes of this partnership-working to lay a long-lasting legacy for Southwark.
30. It is clear that a huge amount has been achieved in a quick space of time to support those most vulnerable through the Covid-19 crisis, but the work of the Community Hub has not always been an easy task. There has been a strong view of all partners that overall things have gone well and that there is a lot we can build on for the future.

The Community Hub Review Group

31. The rapid review group was established in order to hear evidence from partners from across sectors on the response to date and views on priorities for the future of the Community Hub. Through the process of the review we have also sought to capture the lessons of the partnership-working to date.
32. The review has been led by a cross sector review group, including the following council, VCS and health representative:
 - Cllr Kieron Williams (Chair)
 - Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health
 - Cathy Deplessis, Director, Southwark Pensioners Centre
 - Chris Mikata-Pralat, CEO, Community Southwark
 - Hayley Ormandy, Programme Director Partnership Southwark, NHS Southwark
 - Mike Wilson, Director, Pembroke House
 - Supported by a cross-council group of senior officers
33. The review group undertook an extensive programme of engagement and considered evidence from a wide range of sources including:
 - The eight local community food hubs that formed part of the Community Hub
 - Funders like United St Saviours who had supported the response
 - Services dealing with people needing hardship support and accessing the Southwark Emergency Support Scheme
 - Mutual-aid groups who mobilised thousands of volunteers alongside other grassroots community groups like Tenants & Residents Associations.
 - The Forum for Equalities and Human Rights in Southwark
 - Adult Social Care Providers
 - Health and Social Prescribing workers

- Public Health officers
 - Voluntary & Community Sector organisations across the borough who engaged in a wide ranging series of events organised and facilitated by Community Southwark.
34. The review also has also drawn on a range of research into the impacts of the pandemic in Southwark and on the work of the Community Hub itself, including:
- Survey of a representative sample of people supported by the current Hub arrangements
 - Survey of a representative sample of Southwark's population
 - Survey of voluntary and community organisations
 - Analysis of people served by the current Community Hub arrangements,
 - Rapid needs assessment to understand the health and wellbeing impact of the pandemic.
35. A number of key findings have emerged through this evidence concerning the challenges and opportunities facing the borough that have helped to frame the recommendations on the development of the community hub.
36. As well as tackling what we should do as partners next, throughout the evidence it has also been clear that there is a lot to learn from how partners have worked together through the current crisis. In many ways these are some of the most striking reflections from the review process and, taken together, these lessons can usefully form principles to underpin our collective approach as we develop the recommendations.
37. The principles for partnership working moving forward are:
- Mutuality and reciprocity – people and organisations contributing what they can as well as receiving support when they need it
 - Clarity of purpose - working to a clear common purpose
 - Collective resources – working to make the best uses of the resources we have in Southwark across the system an across all partners
 - Operations not just strategy – getting on with practical work together across the system
 - Relationships and communication - a partnership of equals across sectors
 - Data and technology - Effective use of data and intelligence to achieve more
 - Co-design – all partners working together to design the network and share approaches and tools.
38. The principles for providing support moving forward are:
- People are fully involved in identifying their needs and planning the support they receive
 - People have the opportunity to build on their strengths – planning of support helps individuals to identify their strengths at a personal and community level
 - People have access to the information, advice and guidance they need to meet their needs
 - People feel that they have access to services to improve their lives and wellbeing
 - Mutuality and reciprocity – people and communities contributing what they can as well as receiving support when they need it, and being valued for what they contribute.

Summary of key findings and recommendations of the review group

39. The review report notes that building a longer-term legacy from the community hub means facing a number of challenges. Until there is an effective vaccine or treatment for Covid-19 we need to manage the transition from the currently emergency phase of the crisis through the next phases of lockdown, as well as remain prepared to scale-up activity again based on any future spikes in the virus. The first two recommendations set out below cover this transition period.
40. The review concludes that we need a clear framework to build on the lessons and opportunities of the community hub work over the longer-term. This requires clarity of vision, operating model and underlying principles. Taken together, this framework forms the governing recommendation of the report.
41. As set out in the key findings, the review process has touched on a number of wide-ranging issues that will require concerted work by partners over the longer-term. The review group identified a number of these contingencies and makes recommendations for how these areas of work could be aligned with the framework set out for the borough.
42. **Transition Recommendations:**
 - **Recommendation 1 – A Managed Transition:** That all partners put in place a managed transition for people supported by the Covid-19 Community Hub, stepping down support where it is no longer needed and ensuring people who need ongoing assistance are matched with the appropriate support.
 - **Recommendation 2 – The Emergency Operating Model:** The council and partners should agree a Covid-19 community support plan that sets out the emergency operating model in the event of a further spike in Covid-19 or a further lockdown.
43. **Legacy Recommendations:**
 - (i) **Governing Recommendation: Building a Borough where everyone can contribute**
 - **Recommendation 3 – A new alliance:** The council, VCS and health partners should work together to strengthen and further develop a Southwark community support alliance. This should be focused on providing social support that delivers long-term reductions in inequality, combining resources, building on the successes of the Community Hub, and founded on the vision, outcomes, principles and framework set out below.
 - (ii) **Recommendations on related work**

The issues raised at the review group have been wide-ranging and has touched on a range of issues that relate to work taken forward by other groups and initiatives. Here we set out a range of recommendations that would bring these workstreams into line with the framework and vision of our governing recommendation.

- **Recommendation 4 - Embedding services in neighbourhoods:** Partners should embed access to existing service provision within neighbourhoods. This should include testing new ways of providing housing, employment, skills,

money, social care and immigration support in local communities - including testing how support from established public & VCS providers can be made accessible in partnership with local community 'anchor' organisations rooted in each part of the borough.

- **Recommendation 5 – Making the Most of Social Prescribing:** Health partners should explore how social prescribing can become a central element of the community support alliance.
- **Recommendation 6 – Building effective referral systems:** The council, VCS and health partners should develop and embed a social support referral system – building on the success of the work Community Southwark have been leading using the Airtable platform.
- **Recommendation 7 – Encouraging and Supporting Volunteering:** The review recognised the significant role that volunteers have played in supporting vulnerable people in the borough. The review group recommends that Community Southwark should work with partners to find ways to celebrate and support volunteering.
- **Recommendation 8 – Aligning plans for emergency food provision:** Partners should work with the Southwark Food Action Alliance to develop a stronger common approach to emergency food provision, including establishing aligned criteria/thresholds, ways of avoiding duplication of service to individual people and shared relationships with food suppliers.
- **Recommendation 9 - Developing a common long-term approach to tackling food insecurity:** Partners should scale up community run low cost food projects - working through the Southwark Food Action Alliance to develop options for affordable food provision that support people's dignity and independence (including community supermarkets, pantries etc.), linked to the review of the food security plan.
- **Recommendation 10 – Understanding Southwark's hidden populations:** Research should be undertaken to better understand Southwark's population who do not have full recourse to public funds – to identify the scale of the population and the issues they face. Working with the VCS groups that are currently supporting large number of people in this situation to undertake the research.
- **Recommendation 11 – Tackling Digital Exclusion:** There is an urgent need to prioritise connecting digitally excluded people, including identifying how access to devices and data can be improved for people who cannot currently afford them and strengthening digital skills.
- **Recommendation 12 – Supporting grassroots organisations:** Community Southwark should review how capacity building support in the borough can best support the development of Southwark social/ community support alliance together with development/implementation of a formal partnership model of delivery with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.
- **Recommendation 13 – Leveraging existing funds:** Funders in Southwark and beyond should consider how they can best use their existing resources to support the delivery of these recommendations.

- **Recommendation 14 – Tackling inequalities:** The review group heard evidence on the significant disproportionate impact on some communities. The review therefore recommends that all partners should:
 - Undertake joint work to understand those who were and remain worst affected by Covid-19, for example BAME groups.
 - Improve the way they collect, use and act on data moving forward, covering all equalities groups.

- **Recommendation 15 – Principles for working together:** The partnership should adopt the following principles in working together:
 - Mutuality and reciprocity – people and organisations contributing what they can as well as receiving support when they need it.
 - Co-design – all partners and residents working together to design the alliance and share approaches and tools.
 - Clarity of purpose - working to a clear common purpose.
 - Collective resources – working to make the best uses of the resources we have in Southwark across the system and across all partners.
 - Operations not just strategy – getting on with practical work together across the system.
 - Relationships and communication - a partnership of equals across sectors.
 - Data and technology - Effective use of data and intelligence to achieve more.

Both this and recommendation 16 are key enablers to the longer term approach.

- **Recommendation 16 – Principles for providing support:** The partnership should adopt the following principles for providing support moving forward:
 - Mutuality and reciprocity – people and communities contributing what they can as well as receiving support when they need it, and being valued for what they contribute.
 - People are fully involved in identifying their needs and planning the support they receive.
 - People have the opportunity to build on their strengths – planning of support helps individuals to identify their strengths at a personal and community level.
 - People have access to the information, advice and guidance they need to meet their needs.
 - People feel that they have access to services and less formal groups that improve their lives and wellbeing.

Stepping Down the current hub activity

44. Southwark's Covid-19 Community Hub has been a remarkable success. Over 10,000 people have received significant support. Whilst much of this has been to meet short-term needs resulting from lockdown, a significant number of people need ongoing support either to meet pre-existing needs or as a result of the recession the pandemic has triggered.

45. It is vital that as a partnership we ensure a managed transition for people supported by the Covid-19 Community Hub as it steps down. This means stepping down support where it is no longer needed and ensuring people who need ongoing assistance are matched with appropriate support.

A Southwark Community Support Alliance

46. The success of our Community Hub has shown the potential for a stronger more integrated network of social support. A wealth of organisations are working to tackle poverty and inequality locally but support is fragmented. There is an opportunity to better integrate support in ways that build on the solidarity and reciprocity we have seen during this pandemic.
47. Moving forward the review recommends that we should develop a Southwark social/ community support alliance that is focused on providing social support that delivers long-term reductions in inequality, building on the successes of the Community Hub, and founded on the following outcomes and framework.
48. The high level outcomes for the alliance are
 - To improve outcomes for Southwark residents in ways that reduce inequalities in:
 - Self-efficacy
 - Health & Wellbeing
 - Resilience
 - Income
 - Food security & nutrition
 - Employment
 - Education & skills
 - Debt
 - Homelessness
 - To increase the number of Southwark residents who are giving back to their community.
49. The proposed framework for the Southwark Community Support Alliance is:
 - A borough wide access point – so people can find the support that is available for them.
 - Local community hubs/anchor organisations - providing advice and support in each part of the borough, with an agreed common role but provided by organisations that each have their own unique mission and operating model. Including making best use of space and the collective estate within neighbourhoods to support delivery.
 - Grassroots community groups (MA groups & TRAs etc.) working to ensure support reaches those who needs it.
 - Advice and support services (benefits, employment, housing, debt, immigration, social care etc.) provided by the voluntary and public sector, including independent advice.
 - Information and knowledge hub – provision of up to date information on central government policies, Southwark’s policies and procedures, changes in regulations and training support for advice providers.
 - Population group based ‘hubs’, providing access to specialist support:
 - Older People & Carers Hub
 - Wellbeing Hub
 - All-age Disabilities Hub
 - Children and Families Centres.

- Referral systems, including embedding the use of Airtable and development of Airtable as a community platform for disseminating information to providers.
- Data sharing, at a feasible and proportionate level between partners in the network.
- Coordination & engagement, including an overall coordination group and one or more forums to ensure wider key partners are engaged and mechanisms to engage the wider voluntary sector (building on the current community hub arrangements).
- Communications, so Southwark residents understand how to access the support and advice they need and are aware of how to volunteer and make donations to crisis support.

A Covid-19 Community Support Plan

50. The risk of a second wave of Covid-19 remains high. Whilst Southwark's response to the first wave had many strengths there are lessons that can be learnt and improvements that can be made. A clear plan needs to be agreed by all partners to ensure the best possible response to any future increases in the local infection rate.

51. The high level response plan is set out as Appendix 1 to this report.

Testing New Ways of providing information, advice, guidance and support rooted in local communities

52. Food poverty is often one of the most pressing issues people face but is rarely the root cause of their difficulties. To maximise their wellbeing, many people need to be able to address housing, employment, skills, money, social care, immigration and wider issues. However, people often find the support that is available hard to access.

53. It is therefore proposed to Test new ways of providing housing, employment, skills, money, social care and immigration support in local communities - including testing how support from established public & VCS providers can be made accessible in partnership with local community 'anchor' organisations rooted in each part of the borough.

A link to social prescribing

54. The link between primary care and wider social support in the borough could be much stronger. The NHS has invested in a five-year social prescribing programme to help overcome this. Integrating this work with the Southwark social/ community support network has the potential to achieve a leap forward in NHS/VCS/Council coordination.

55. It is proposed to explore how social prescribing can become a central element of the social/community support network.

56. The aim is to better join up 'social prescribing' services that have developed organically in Southwark incl. PCN social prescribing link workers so that this best supports Community Hub partners, can assist with collaborative/cross working and improve outcomes for local residents.

57. Collaboration and communication between partners will ensure a joined up, multi-disciplinary approach, which will reduce duplication and cater to the widest possible range of health and care needs.

58. A key principle is no wrong door for those accessing the support that they need every door is the right door.
59. The coordination role by the social prescribing service can ensure residents have access to a range of local services appropriate to their individual needs. Services involved will be able to specialise and maintain focus with wider social needs being covered by partner service and organisations involved.
60. A focus for this work will be to consider if any resources will be allocated from the NHS social prescribing scheme to the VCS groups handling their referrals.

Developing and embedding a social support referral system

61. As part of the work on the Community Hub partners have achieved a leap forward in the sharing of referrals and data between public and VCS bodies. There is an opportunity to embed this work and in so doing to reduce duplication of effort and achieve better outcomes for Southwark residents.
62. It is therefore recommended to continue to develop and embed a social support referral system – building on the success of the work Community Southwark have been leading on using the Airtable platform.

Celebrating and supporting volunteering as a legacy

63. Southwark residents have responded to the pandemic by giving unprecedented amounts of their time to volunteer for their community. Whilst volunteer numbers are dropping from their peak in April-June there continues to be a large number of people wishing to give back, including those who have also benefited from support.
64. Community Southwark is planning to recognise the work of volunteers on covid-19 as part of Southwark Stars ceremony in November 2020.
65. The partners will work with Community Southwark on a joint piece of work on encouraging and supporting volunteering. This will include how we can develop volunteers that reflect the demography of local communities, and what we can offer volunteers (e.g. functional skills training, career pathways for younger volunteers).

A stronger common approach to emergency food provision

66. Covid-19 has made starkly clear the levels of food insecurity in our borough. Until the multiple inadequacies of the UK's welfare system are addressed there will continue to be a need for foodbanks. Opportunities exist to further strengthen collaboration and coordination between Southwark's foodbanks.
67. It is recommended to develop a stronger common approach to emergency food provision – working through the Southwark Food Action Alliance, including establishing aligned criteria/thresholds, ways of avoiding duplication of service to individual people and shared relationships with food suppliers.

Community run low cost food projects

68. Partners in Southwark share a long-term aim to end food insecurity and poverty and the need for foodbanks. As part of that aim there is strong interest in collaborating to develop more affordable community run food options. A range of initiatives are already happening across the borough that can be built on.

69. The review recommends scaling up community run low cost food projects - working through the Southwark Food Action Alliance to develop options for affordable food provision that support people's dignity and independence (including community supermarkets, pantries etc), linked to the review of the food security plan.

Understanding those without recourse to public funds

70. Throughout the review we have heard that a high proportion of people tipped into poverty by Covid-19 do not have full recourse to public funds. Without a welfare system to fall back on people in this situation have been left in acute financial hardship. There is an urgent need to better understand the scale of this issue and to make the case for a more humane immigration system.
71. Undertake research to better understand Southwark's population who do not have full recourse to public funds – to identify the scale of the population and the issues they face. Working with the VCS groups that are currently supporting large number of people in this situation to undertake the research.

Addressing digital exclusion

72. Partners in Southwark have had incredible success in using digital platforms help provide social support during Covid-19. Many more people have engaged with these tools than might have been thought. However, the pandemic has also starkly shown the scale of exclusion for people who do not have access to a device or data, or who do not have digital skills.
73. The review group concluded that it is important moving forward to prioritise connecting digitally excluded people – including identify how access to devices and data can be improved for people who cannot currently afford them and strengthening digital skills.

Reviewing capacity building support

74. There is a strong desire across VCS organisations in Southwark to work together to improve social support. Almost all VCS organisations in the borough are small and need support to develop. There is strong interest in doing this in reciprocal ways that link more established and emerging organisations so they can learn and improve support in their areas together.
75. The review recommends that the council work with Community Southwark to review how capacity building support in the borough can best support the development of Southwark social/ community support alliance.

The role of Funders

76. In the first phase of the response to the pandemic local and regional funders stepped forward to support the huge scale of community activity meeting the needs of vulnerable people impacted by Covid-19. Businesses and others also came forward with donations of food, other goods and services.
77. The review recommends that funders in Southwark should consider how they can best use their existing resources to support the delivery of these recommendations.

Addressing the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19

78. There were a number of groups that were identified as experiencing a disproportionately negative impact of Covid-19. An overarching theme to the partnership response has been to focus on protecting the most vulnerable in society. To identify these groups requires a thorough analysis of all the data available within the council and key stakeholders. In particular, this would include a review of monitoring data on local residents accessing services both before and during lockdown to identify changing patterns of demand and emerging trends, especially since services have moved predominantly online.
79. The review group recommended that all partners should work together to understand the disproportionate impacts and all partners should improve the way they collect, use and act on data on this going forward, covering all equalities groups.

Policy implications

80. 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. At its meeting on 5 May the cabinet agreed to instruct 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. The issues raised in this report will be factored into this work taking account of the broader policy and financial landscape as local and national recovery and renewal planning.

Community impact statement

81. Covid-19 continues to impact residents and partners across the borough. As has been previously noted by cabinet the issues raised demonstrate, the full impact of Covid-19 on the borough cannot yet be known. This will become clearer in the months ahead. Some impacts may not be clear for some years.
82. The report notes the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable people and in particular on BAME groups. Cabinet is recommended to take forward a programme of work that responds to the inequalities exposed by Covid-19.
83. The wider social, environmental and economic impact on residents and the borough are 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.
84. The Public Sector Equality Duty will be taken into account as we deliver services and respond to the continuing impact of Covid-19 on our borough as well as plan any changes to policy and operations arising from that impact. This will include more detailed identification of any vulnerable groups and individuals who may be in particular need of targeted support through the ongoing community support alliance.

Resource implications

85. The estimated cost to the council to the end of September for the work on the Community Hub is £935,000 including food, staff costs and support for VCS partners.

86. The council has had to continue to respond quickly at unprecedented speed to the impact of Covid-19 on our borough and its communities. Beyond 31 March 2021, any resource implications from this work will be met within existing resources and if necessary considered through the process of agreeing the new Policy & Resources Strategy between November 2020 and February 2021.
87. There will be short-term costs of continuing this response to the pandemic between now and December and these are likely to be of the order of £250,000 including support for VCS partners in the current financial year. This will be a call on the emergency funding from central government. Should we need to step up the response again because of a further increase in the spread of covid-19 and further lockdowns these could be higher. The intention in the interim is to transition people to other forms of support and the team are reviewing all cases to consider what other support meets their needs. This includes that there is a referral process for those who may need support in claiming benefits or maximising their income to the local support team and where it is an option transitioning people to priority supermarket delivery slots for vulnerable people. A more detailed resourcing plan will be brought back to cabinet in October with the full response to implementation.

Consultation

88. The review of the community hub has involved extensive consultation with partners in the VCS and health sectors and with residents impacted by Covid-19. It has also involved consultation with officers across the council. Moving forward co-design with partners and residents is a key principle of the approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable residents.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy [20200901/NBC/v1]

89. The Localism Act 2011 gives councils a general power of competence whereby they have power to do anything that individuals generally may do. This power can be used even if legislation already exist that allow a local authority to do the same thing. However, the general power of competence does not enable a local authority to do anything which it is unable to do by virtue of a pre-commencement or other limitation.
90. When making its decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that the decision maker must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination other prohibited conduct and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. Information about the council's assessment of the performance of this duty is set out in the body of the report.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (H&M020/62)

91. This report recommends a managed transition for those people currently supported by the Community Hub between now and December 2020. With a further report to cabinet in October 2020 detailing the implementation plan.
92. As noted within the resource implications, the estimated cost of the Community hub is £935,000 to the end of September (with £864,000 spend to date). There is a further estimated amount of £250,000 to help with the transition period. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet member for

Finance, Performance and Brexit, will determine the most appropriate allocation of Covid-19 emergency funding to council priorities.

93. Notwithstanding the government funding that has been made available to the council to mitigate the exceptional costs arising from Covid-19, it will be insufficient to meet the full financial impact on the council, therefore, careful consideration of the implementation plan and the ability to continue this work within existing resources beyond March 2021 will help minimise the financial burden on the council.

Reasons for Lateness

94. The report is late to take into account the considerations of the review group that only concluded on 21 August 2020 and to take into account the most up to date information on the response to Covid-19. Officers therefore needed time to consider the outcomes ahead of drafting the response to the report set out in Appendix 1.

Reasons for Urgency

95. The report is urgent so that Cabinet can agree and put in place, necessary next steps on support for vulnerable residents when the current arrangement ends at the end of September that will allow the council and partners to continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the borough.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Papers of the review working group	Communities Division, Environment & Leisure 160 Tooley Street	Stephen Douglass 0207 525 0886
https://www.communitysouthwark.org/southwark-community-hub-one-stop-support-during-the-covid-19-coronavirus-crisis		
Fairer Southwark Food Plan	Communities Division, Environment & Leisure 160 Tooley Street	Stephen Douglass 0207 525 0886
https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/for-professionals?chapter=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Covid-19 Community Hub: Report of the Review Working Group
Appendix 2	Southwark Community Hub Response Plan

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Cllr Kieron Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing Management	
Lead Officer	Michael Scorer, Strategic Director of Housing & Modernisation	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities	
Version	Final	
Dated	3 September 2020	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	3 September 2020	