

## **Cabinet – 28 October 2020**

### **Covid-19 - Community response**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Perry, Deputy Leader, Resilient Communities.

**Related portfolios:** Councillor Martin, Adult Social Care

**Service:** Resilient Communities

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Aim**

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the key issues for community response to the current COVID-19 and report on the current status.

#### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic has continued to have a major negative impact on the borough. The Council has in place key elements of operational infrastructure that are in a positive state of readiness for the latest restrictions due to the current High Alert Level.
- 2.2 A key segment of the population are those that are vulnerable and shielded. A support programme has been set up with Adult Social Care to provide telephone contact and support through the Making Connections Walsall Hubs.
- 2.3 Cabinet are asked to approve the extension of this support programme to the end of March 2021 at a cost of £108,000.00

#### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves further expenditure of £108,000 from the Emergency Assistance grant, allocated for a further five months of support for shielded residents who do not meet the criteria for support from Adult Social Care.

#### **4. Report detail - know**

- 4.1 Walsall Council is now in tier 2 of the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the alert level for the borough is high. This alert level

increases the number of restrictions on residents and businesses in the borough of Walsall.

4.2 The community and community organisations have provided a highly effective response to key elements of our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3 The Council has focused on ensuring the key infrastructure elements that support the community response is ready to cope with the higher alert level key elements of infrastructure that needs to be in place as the Making Connections Walsall has been a key part of that community response.

4.4 The key infrastructure elements are:

- Food supply lines
- MCW- West Midlands Fire Service Infrastructure
- MCW – Hubs infrastructure
- Volunteer support for hubs
- E-mail infrastructure
- Communications
- Medically shielding support
- Governance

4.5 The following table provides a checklist of activities and their current status.

Activity	Status	Notes
Food parcels		1000 food parcels were prepared in readiness for any increased restrictions. The majority have been moved to MCW hubs in readiness for use.
Food parcel criteria		Draft is attached to this briefing as appendix (a). General direction is that most users in need of food support will be signposted to other schemes including shopping services, priority supermarket slots and other supermarket home delivery offers. Clear need to avoid dependency culture.
Fire service infrastructure		In place and scalable. Funding in place for core service until March 2021.
MCW Hubs		Operationally ready and funded until the end of March 2021. Capacity will be monitored on a regular basis.
Volunteers		Food parcel deliveries will not be required however additional volunteer support may be required.

E-mail infrastructure		In place and operating. Additional resource on standby.
Communications		New COVID-19 leaflet being prepared. Decision required on distribution method. Leaflet will also focus on £500 emergency payment administered through Money, Home, Job. Engagement with appropriate VCS sector underway (Food banks, food providers outside of MCW). General communication through resident newsletter and local press.
Contact with medically shielded individuals.		Requirement to keep in contact with residents medically shielded. Currently through MCW Hubs and working effectively. Fully funded until the end of October 2020. The cost of providing this support will be £108k and will cover a 5 month period between November 2020 and March 2021. This work is seen as critical to wellbeing during the pandemic and also a key factor in supporting vulnerable people who do not meet criteria for statutory support.
Governance		VCS bronze is still in operation. Organisations invited include One Walsall, Public Health, MHJ and West Midlands Police. MCW are connected through our Resilient Communities team.
Overall status		

### ***Council Corporate Plan priorities***

- 4.6 A Resilient Communities approach will assist the Council across all of its corporate priorities. In particular the corporate priority of “Communities prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.” A confident and resilient community sector is the key to delivering this priority. The key success factor in the delivery of the community response during the first stage of the pandemic was attributable to the work of communities, focused through hubs, on key support activities.

### ***Risk management***

- 4.7 A failure to deliver appropriate support during the tightening of restrictions could lead to vulnerable people not receiving the appropriate support. These risks are mitigated through appropriate support in the right location at the right time

### ***Financial implications***

- 4.8 The council has received a grant of £420,000 from the Government for emergency assistance. This funding is being utilised for a range of activities to support vulnerable citizens during the pandemic, including support for those residents who were advised to shield. This report seeks approval to provide funding of £108,000 for 4 community hubs from within the total grant allocation.

### ***Legal implications***

- 4.9 There are no legal implications of this report.

### ***Procurement Implications/Social Value***

- 4.10 Expenditure needs to comply with our corporate procurement policy.

### ***Property implications***

- 4.11 There are no property implications of this report.

### ***Health and wellbeing implications***

- 4.12 The COVID-19 pandemic is creating increased issues amongst our communities and the impact has been felt amongst those shielding, therefore any activity that creates contact in a COVID-safe environment is welcomed. This work provides much needed contact in difficult times.

### ***Staffing implications***

- 4.13 There are no direct staffing implications of this report.

### ***Reducing Inequalities***

- 4.14 A resilient community plays a key role in reducing inequalities. A confident community identifying local solutions will challenge the most critical areas of need in their community.

### ***Consultation***

- 4.15 There are no Consultation implications of this report.

## **5 Decide**

- 5.1 Cabinet are asked to approve COVID-19 funding of £108,000 for support to vulnerable adults through the MCW hubs.

## 6 Respond

6.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on how the Council operates. The last eight months has seen the Resilient Communities approach deliver and the Council will continue to place Resilient Communities at the heart of what it does.

## 7 Review

7.1 Cabinet will receive a further Resilient Communities report in January 2021. In the meantime the resilient communities approach will continue to be utilised as it has proved to be an effective approach.

### Background papers

None

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Simon Neilson  
Executive Director

22 October 2020



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22 October 2020