

Coronavirus Response – Action Plan

1. Response Cells

Objective	Responsibility	Status Update
1. Council Service delivery		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the delivery of essential (priority 1 and 2) services throughout the situation Re-model council services to be able to continue to operate in the context of the situation to protect the health, safety and welfare of staff, Members and public Maintain the delivery of priority 3 services that are essential to the recovery of the council and town 	Managing Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes implemented to monitor delivery of services Processes developed and implemented to robustly document and agree changes to service delivery in response to the situation As at 20/4/20 - 51 changes agreed primarily to support social distancing requirements through reduction in face-to-face service delivery (See Appendix 2) Very close monitoring of council staffing levels to ensure maintenance of priority services if there are high-levels of sickness or other abstractions
2. Rough Sleepers and Homelessness		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide accommodation to all rough sleepers in Watford for the duration of “lockdown” To respond to any emerging housing demands 	Head of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60 Rough Sleepers housed in various accommodation across Watford Excellent support from New Hope and One YMCA in responding to the situation Unique opportunity to provide long term solution for rough sleepers – strategy being developed
3. Co-ordinating our Community Response		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To setup a local hub to co-ordinate / have oversight of all voluntary activity in Watford To ensure that our most vulnerable in all areas of Watford have the required support from volunteers 	Group Head of Community and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated approach with Herts CC and W3RT to develop and support volunteering strategy Successfully recruited over 1,100 volunteers (WBC and HCC volunteer recruitment)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support our volunteers in responding to emerging needs in a safe and meaningful way To respond to requirements from the LRF / central government 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holywell Community Hub set up to hold and store food – Costco and Morrison’s have agreed to donate food Fundraising site now live and taking donations - £67,000 raised by 21/04 All residents requiring/requesting support have been helped – 164 requests received by 20/04
4. Support for Business		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure businesses are aware of the measures being put in place by government To put the infrastructure in place to deliver the financial commitments the government have made to support businesses To hear and respond consistently to any other issues or concerns raised by businesses 	<p>Group Head of Strategy and Communications / Head of Revenues and Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established and implemented process for issuing Small Business grants (£10k) and Retail, Hospitality & leisure grants (£25k) - £11.3m paid out to 74% of accounts by 22/04 Implemented 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in the area Established initial Recovery plan (see Recovery Cell below) Council website updated with relevant business information Leaflet for businesses produced Regular messaging through @WatfordBusiness twitter Messages being sent through partner organisations e.g. Watford Chamber of Commerce, Wenta, Watford BID Mayor has taken part in virtual business events
5. Watford Together		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinate the creative organisations in Watford to provide a programme of events / activities throughout the lockdown and social distancing period to provide people with entertainment while they are staying at home To plan events to mark the end of the incident to celebrate, thank and reflect 	<p>Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established website for local community Engaged with a wide range of local organisations to provide content and support for website Thousands of hits on website and significant engagement (e.g. 400 participants in on line dance event) Increasing content every day on website Planning for post virus remembrance and celebration services underway

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6. Community Impact and Cohesion (One Watford)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess and understand the current community impacts due to covid-19 situation in Watford in order to inform and target actions / interventions. To ensure there are sufficient and appropriate resources available to deliver the required actions To inform the work and decisions of other cells across the council to maximise the effectiveness of interventions. To ensure legislation and guidance is adhered to across Watford to address any adverse community impacts 	<p>Group Head of Community and Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High visibility of police on the streets Crime reduced by over 42% compared to this time last year e.g. burglaries very low Generally Watford public has been very observant of the lockdown e.g. parks have not been busy One Watford, Council, W3RT and Police have worked very closely together to ensure a coordinated approach Some concerns re increasing domestic abuse and neighbour disputes
7. Bereavement Support and Funeral Provision		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bereaved family and friends have access to the required advice, support and information The Cemetery and Crematorium are effective in meeting the demands placed upon them within their capacity Work collectively with partners including other burial authorities to meet all of our communities' demands 	<p>Head of Community Protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased staffing at the cemetery and crematorium to ensure resilience and greater capacity Increased stock of graves at cemetery Established agreement with Muslim community about approach Muslim burials Developed solution for additional mortuary capacity using Council leased premises in local business park Looking to develop additional option at North Watford Cemetery – fast tracked design/implementation of site

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8. Responding to external demands		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and prepare the organisational response to any demands made of the council either by government or LRF partners 	Group Head of Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily collation, review and dissemination of guidance and information from government and other key agencies Responding to all requests for information from the SCG, TCG and LRF partners to support the Hertfordshire wide incident response Reviewed our Rest Centre plans in light of the current conditions
9. Public Health Response		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess and understand the current epidemiology of the covid-19 incident in Watford and Three Rivers in order to inform and target interventions To inform the work and decisions of other cells across the council to maximise the effectiveness of controls. To work proactively to ensure the legislation and guidance is adhered to across Watford to minimise infection and deaths To support partners and community and faith groups in complying with the legal requirements and best practice to minimise spread To support and facilitate the implementation of alternate ways to meet business, community and faith needs 	Head of Community Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily update of epidemiology data to inform the outbreak information locally and working with HCC public health team weekly to model the predicted outcomes Daily intelligence collection and analysis to inform and direct reactive and proactive work streams to minimise spread of the disease. High risk premises, locations, activities, businesses, groups of our community and individuals have been identified and are being targeted to minimise spread of the disease. Herts wide Environmental Health response group created (Watford chairing) and working jointly to respond directly to the Covid-19 infection control work stream to manage individuals infected in support of PHE. Letters sent to over 4,000 businesses at the start of restrictions to advise and explain the requirements as well as to signpost to advice. Advice pack designed for businesses moving to takeaway delivery to ensure they are safe and compliant Advice pack and resources designed and in use through face to face visits to enable businesses, particularly retail at present, to minimise spread of the disease and comply with social distancing requirements. Targeted work underway with 100's of funeral directors who visit the Cemetery and Crematorium to minimise spread of the disease.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted advice promoted to taxi drivers including a devoted web page, text messaging etc. • Working with HCC to promote resilience in care home settings. • Working with Trading Standards to carry out monitoring, investigate complaints and taking enforcement action where businesses do not engage and continue to break the law. • >100 service requests and complaints received specifically about social distancing or businesses opening. • Working with landlords and housing support services to target shared accommodation providers/users in particular those with vulnerable tenants to ensure social distancing and measures to reduce the spread of disease. • Working with the local Mosques and Muslim community leaders to reduce the spread of the disease throughout Ramadan. • Identifying groups of our community that may require targeted advice to encourage compliance and ensure associated businesses are compliant. • Working directly in the community with businesses and stakeholders to deal with pinch points that have been identified such as Whippendell Road, Market Street and Vicarage Road Precinct. Holistic approach being taken to support businesses and adapt the street environment to aid social distancing.

2. Cross-cutting Cells

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1. Communication		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that people get the right information at the right time to dispel rumour and unnecessary worry – WBC should be a trusted and credible source of information • Keep morale and a sense of community spirit high 	<p>Group Head of Strategy and Communications</p>	<p>Residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflet sent to every home in the borough (translated into Urdu and put out by the Talking Newspaper) • Updated website with a range of relevant information and support • Communications campaigns on specific areas e.g. Watford Together, Watford Helps • Communications campaigns on keeping safe and healthy • Significant stepping up of use of social media • Regular e-newsletters • Regular news releases – particularly through Watford Observer • Utilising digital poster sites in the town centre • Advertising on Watford Observer for key messaging • Elected Mayor videos (+ his own channels / social media / e-newsletters / Facebook live) • Key messages out through partner organisation e.g. Watford Community Housing, W3RT <p>Staff and elected members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication to staff and members with important information and updates • Intranet updated with a particular focus on health and wellbeing • In touch updates from the Managing Director to staff • Videos from the Elected Mayor to staff

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails to councillors on specific issues e.g. green waste collection changes • Relevant information e.g. from LRF circulated to members
2. Workforce Resilience		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring employees get the right Health and Wellbeing information at the right time. • Providing appropriate tailored and timely support for employees directly, and heavily, involved in death management, particularly cemetery and crematorium staff. • Ensuring appropriate HR policies and processes are in place to cover our new ways of working, e.g. volunteering records. • Ensuring employees are compensated appropriately during a time where they are being asked to work beyond their normal role. • Ensuring priority services are maintained, including ensuring staff continue to be paid correctly and in accordance with their contract of employment, including incremental progression from 1 April. 	Group Head of HR and OD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watford BC website – updated regularly – responding to current advice and information and providing resources on range of areas e.g. Employee Assistance Programme, H&W blog, manager information, breakout room. • Emails - to employees on updated information regarding health and wellbeing support and new policies. • Developed mental health and wellbeing section of website to support staff through COVID period
3. Finance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the financial impact of the COVID crisis on the finances of WBC • Provide required updates to central government on the impact of COVID on WBC's finances 	Director of Finance / Head of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes implemented for tracking and capturing all Covid-19 response related spend • Approach developed to support informed financial decision-making within the current budget, but mindful of the potential financial implications of the situation

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to any schemes involving the disbursement of grants/loans or payments from the Council 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial assessment of financial impact developed for discussion at Cabinet on 4 May
4. Governance and Decision-making		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Council is following the guidance issued on governance matters throughout the COVID crisis 	Group Head of Democracy and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New processes developed and implemented for virtual council meetings 8x8 to be deployed to all councillors
5. Recovery		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put in place and carry out activities to help ensure that Watford (as a place and as a council) recovers from the impacts of Covid and thrives going forwards Support recovery across all aspects of the response work: economic, financial, social, operational, staff/organisational and communications Integrate strategic direction for the ‘new normal’ into recovery activities Ensure Watford is well prepared to move from Covid response and resilience to the recovery and thrive phase over the short and longer-term 	Group Head of Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial thoughts on Recovery priorities and approach developed – six strands across two phases identified – Phase 1: Economic; Financial. Phase 2: Social; Operational; Staff/Organisational; Communications. Phase 1 is being carried out by those not so heavily involved in Covid response. Work is on-going on Phase 1 e.g., looking at the impacts of Covid19 on the council’s capital projects and on its investment portfolio, as well as implications for businesses. Phase 2 activities are less developed, although some work has already been started by individual services. Work on organisational recovery to bring the council to a new normal way of operating, not just return to the previous approach, has commenced.