

AGENDA FOR

COVID 19 – EMERGENCY POWERS GROUP

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To: All Members of Covid 19 Emergency Powers Group

Councillors : D Jones, N Jones, J Mason, E O'Brien,
T Pickstone, A Simpson and T Tariq

Dear Member/Colleague

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Covid 19 Emergency Powers Group which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Thursday, 16 April 2020
Place:	Conference Call
Time:	3.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	

AGENDA

1 SPECIAL URGENCY DECISION (EXECUTIVE FUNCTION) *(Pages 1 - 18)*

Bury Council – Support for individuals and Businesses

2 NOTES FROM COVID 19 EMERGENCY POWERS GROUP 16.4.2020
(Pages 19 - 22)

URGENT DECISION FORM


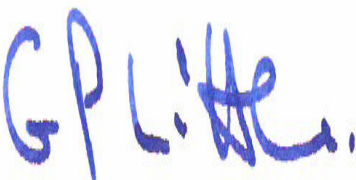


TO BE UPLOADED ON TO THE INTERNET BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES


Date: 16.4.2020		Ref No:	
Type of Decision:			
Cabinet Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Key	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject matter:			
Bury Response – Hardship Support for Individuals and Businesses			
Reason for Urgency:			
Provides details of support required for individuals and businesses during the pandemic			
Freedom of Information Status In public domain			
Equality Impact Assessment			
[Does this decision change policy, procedure or working practice or negatively impact on a group of people? If yes – complete EIA and summarise issues identified and recommendations – forward EIA to Corporate HR]			

Decision taken:

- To note the allocation of £1.888m hardship monies to the council and the criteria on which is to be allocated.
- Note the forecast expenditure of £1.545m on the funds and the remaining unallocated amount of £0.343m
- Agree the proposals to allocate the remaining £0.343k as follows:
 - £100k to the councils existing hardship fund so that is used to provide emergency support to those in crisis;
 - £50k match funding to support the council's proposals to maximise access to the welfare system and take-up of benefits through partnership working with the citizen's advice bureau;
 - £193k to support those in need of additional welfare support – to be allocated throughout the year based subject to the availability of funding.
- To develop a Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau to work in partnership with the council to support those trying to access the welfare systems and to maximise their benefits and that the solution utilises the one-off monies made available as part of the 2020/21 budget resolution.
- To note the potential impact on the council tax income of increased eligibility for the Council Tax Support Scheme and that this is currently a financial risk that will need to be managed and monitored throughout the year.
- To note the existing flexibilities regarding the payment of council tax to support those who are experiencing financial problems;
- To approve the creation of an 'In Work Poverty Hardship Fund' by utilising a balance of £42,000 carried forward from the 2019/20 financial year from members allowances. Note that subject to approval that details on the criteria of the scheme and access arrangements to come forward.
- Note the support to businesses that is currently available and the mechanisms in which Bury businesses are able to access advice and support

Decision taken by:	Signature:	Date:
Chief/Senior Officer/Cabinet Chair		16.4.2020
		16.4.2020
After consultation with:		

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Cabinet Member (if a Key Decision) or Chair or Lead Member (as appropriate)		16.4.2020
If it is a Key Decision, the Chair of Scrutiny Committee to agree that the decision cannot be deferred	Councillor R Caserta consulted	16.4.2020
Opposition Leader or nominated spokesperson (Council Decision) or Leader or Majority Group Member on Overview and Scrutiny Committee (if a Key Decision) to agree that the decision cannot be deferred	Councillor N Jones consulted	16.4.2020
Leader of second largest Opposition Group (if a Key/Council Decision) to agree that the decision cannot be deferred	Councillor T Pickstone consulted	16.4.2020

Although not a requirement of the constitution, Councillor J Mason, Leader of Radcliffe First was also consulted.

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<h1 style="text-align: center;">REPORT FOR DECISION</h1>
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DECISION OF:	Cabinet
DATE:	15.4.2020 Informal Cabinet 16.4.2020 Emergency Powers Group
SUBJECT:	Bury Response – Hardship Support for Individuals and Businesses
REPORT FROM:	Councillor E O’Brien – Cabinet member for Finance and Housing
CONTACT OFFICER:	Lisa Kitto
TYPE OF DECISION:	Key decision
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	In public domain
SUMMARY:	<p>This report sets out the response from Bury council to support individuals and businesses suffering from hardship within Bury as they deal with the impact of COVID19.</p> <p>The government has provided all local authorities with one-off hardship funding to support individuals together with some guidance on how the funding is to be utilised. Bury’s approach to the funding together with some proposals and recommendations on how unallocated funds could be utilised is set out.</p> <p>Support for businesses has mainly been provided through national schemes. More local support is available through the GM Growth Hub and in addition to this a local offer is also being developed. This report summarises all the support available.</p>
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>Cabinet is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the allocation of £1.888m hardship monies to the council and the criteria on which is to be allocated.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the forecast expenditure of £1.545m on the funds and the remaining unallocated amount of £0.343m • Agree the proposals to allocate the remaining £0.343k as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ £100k to the councils existing hardship fund so that is used to provide emergency support to those in crisis; ◦ £50k match funding to support the council's proposals to maximise access to the welfare system and take-up of benefits through partnership working with the citizen's advice bureau; ◦ £193k to support those in need of additional welfare support – to be allocated throughout the year based subject to the availability of funding. • To develop a Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau to work in partnership with the council to support those trying to access the welfare systems and to maximise their benefits and that the solution utilises the one-off monies made available as part of the 2020/21 budget resolution. • To note the potential impact on the council tax income of increased eligibility for the Council Tax Support Scheme and that this is currently a financial risk that will need to be managed and monitored throughout the year. • To note the existing flexibilities regarding the payment of council tax to support those who are experiencing financial problems; • To approve the creation of an 'In Work Poverty Hardship Fund' by utilising a balance of £42,000 carried forward from the 2019/20 financial year from members allowances. Note that subject to approval that details on the criteria of the scheme and access arrangements to come forward. • Note the support to businesses that is currently available and the mechanisms in which Bury businesses are able to access advice and support.
IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes No
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	The costs of the hardship funding can be met from the hardship grant made available to the council. Should demand increase beyond the assumed levels, there is the potential for

	<p>the grant to overspend and this will fall to the council to meet. Monitoring arrangements are in place to monitor the position so that any mitigating arrangements can be considered.</p> <p>An increase in the number of claimants will reduce the level of council tax that the council will collect. This loss of income is not covered by the grant and will be need to be managed with the council's financial strategy. A 10% increase in claimants will result in a £xxx shortfall in income based on a full year effect and changes in collection rates and claimants for LCTS will form part of enhanced monitoring to be introduced..</p> <p>Support for businesses announced by the government is funded including the grants to businesses and the additional business rates reliefs that are administered by local authorities. Funding for these schemes has been received.</p> <p>All other support for businesses will need to be met by the council. The council is facing a significant financial challenge as a result of the crisis with increased demand for some services and loss of income for others. Additional funding has been provided to local authorities though this is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the funding gap that is currently forecast. Any decisions on additional local support will need to be considered in this context.</p>
Equality/Diversity implications:	No
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes Comments
Wards Affected:	ALL
Scrutiny Interest:	

TRACKING/PROCESS**DIRECTOR:**

Joint Executive Team/CCMT	Cabinet Member/Chair Briefed	Ward Members (if necessary)	Partners

Scrutiny Committee	Other Committee	Council	Comms

This report sets out the response within Bury to hardship for both individuals and businesses. Appendix A sets out the approach to individuals and Appendix B sets out the approach to businesses. Full details on the current position, proposals and implications are set out in full in each Appendix.

Contact Details:-

Lisa Kitto

Interim Deputy Chief Finance Officer

Bury Council | Town Hall | Bury | BL9 0EJ

Email: L.kitto@bury.gov.uk

Proposal to Support Hardship for Individuals**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 As part of its response to COVID-19, the government announced in the budget on 11 March that it would provide local authorities in England with £500 million of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. Bury's allocation is £1,888,102 and is based on the caseload of working age households (8,586) already claiming council tax support across the borough.
- 1.2 The expectation from government is that each eligible household (working age local council tax support) receives a credit of £150 against their 2020/21 council tax bill. In addition to this, government's expectation is that any household becoming eligible for council tax support at any point up to 31 March 2021 will also receive the credit against their council tax bill. Details on how this is applied are currently being worked through nationally with MHGLG. An extract from the government guidance is attached at Annex 1.
- 1.3 Having allocated grant to reduce the council tax bill of working age LCTS recipients by a further £150, billing authorities have been asked to establish their own local approach to using any remaining grant to assist those in need. Government also expects billing authorities to revisit their broader approach at intervals during the financial year, in order to ensure expenditure for 2020-21 remains within their allocation.
- 1.4 In supporting hardship, there is a real need to ensure that claimants have access to all the benefits support to which they are entitled as it provides access to longer term income. This was recognised in the council's 2020/21 budget resolution where £50,000 was made available to develop options to work with partners across the borough to support and help residents maximise the benefits to which they are entitled. Given the current situation, the number of residents requiring access to the benefits system is increasing. The opportunity to support benefits take-up and navigate through an extremely complex system is considered an important aspect of the hardship proposals and has been taken into consideration in developing the proposed approach.

2 Background

- 2.1 Based on the information available from government, a credit of £150 for all eligible households across the borough will cost £1.311m. In addition to this it is considered prudent to budget for an increase in the number of claimants over the year. At this stage it is difficult to predict the level of increase and this is likely to be dependent upon the length of time the crisis continues. Assuming a 20% increase is considered reasonable and will add a further cost of £0.234m. This leaves £0.343m to fund increase in costs of hardship schemes as a result of increased demand and any other welfare support required.
- 2.2 It should be noted that as more households become eligible for council tax support scheme, the council will see a reduction in the level of council tax received. This has already been identified as a financial risk to the council. Loss of council tax based on an increased uptake of 20% to LCTS will see a reduction of £1.1m in council tax income. This potential loss of income is currently unfunded and will need to be considered in the context of the wider

COVID-19 monies that have been made available and the wider financial strategy.

- 2.3 Some councils have announced 'council tax holidays'. Bury already offers flexibility in how council tax can be paid by those suffering financial difficulty and it is not considered necessary to offer any further flexibilities. Options currently available to those in need include:
- reducing monthly amounts to pay over a 12 month period instead of the usual 10 months;
 - Payments commencing from May or June effectively providing a one/two month payment holiday
- 2.4 It is proposed that the unallocated funds of £0.343m:
- £100k be added to the councils existing hardship fund of £125k that is used to provide emergency support to those in crisis. This budget is likely to overspend by the end of the year due to increased demand;
 - £50k be made available to match fund the council's budget proposal to maximise access to the welfare system and take-up of benefits through partnership working with the citizen's advice bureau;
 - £193k be made available to support those in need of additional welfare support. It is anticipated that the council will receive requests for welfare support that is different to that provided through the hardship fund. As the crisis continues different vulnerable groups are emerging and some funding to support these is considered prudent. Details of need and demand are starting to emerge from the work of the community hubs and this will be used to shape and develop a further welfare support offer.

3 Benefits of the Approach

- 3.1 In adopting the proposed approach the council is building on existing mechanisms to those suffering from hardship and in need of emergency/crisis support. The council's welfare team are experiencing significant increases in demand and will be able to use the additional funding, in addition to that which is already provided, to meet the additional demand.
- 3.2 The council has worked effectively with the Citizen's Advice Bureau over a number of years. The CAB has worked effectively to help residents navigate the DWP and HMRC process to maximise the benefits and the income they receive. In addition to this they have successfully helped residents pursue claims, negotiate reductions in payments, negotiate advance payments and access discretionary funds from charities. Much of this work has been achieved through drop in centres at council offices and from working closely with the benefits team to identify those most in need of help.
- 3.3 Due to reductions in funding, including that from the council, the service that can be provided by CAB has reduced over time and some of the demand is now falling to the benefits and welfare teams within the council who are struggling to cope at a time when demand is increasing.
- 3.4 Advice on the welfare system and access to benefits is complex and requires people with specialist knowledge. Access to the volunteer network through CAB is also available and should mean that there is a 'greater reach' across the borough. It is proposed that a new Service Level Agreement be developed with the CAB to meet the immediate needs in response to the COVID-19 crisis and to look at options for longer term sustainability to provide longer term support to those in need. Given the links to the council and the integrated way in

which the services have worked in the past, it is envisaged that this can be agreed and in place quickly.

- 3.5 Vulnerable people are being identified through the work of the community hubs and it is clear from the feedback to date that there are more people in our community that need advice and support on welfare benefits. Unless this needs is addressed, these people will continue to request and need crisis support when longer term solutions need to be identified that will work in their best interests. Capacity to deal with this demand is becoming stretched. Data from the community hubs will provide an opportunity to identify needs across the borough and also provide greater insight on where that need is across the borough and will therefore be valuable in supporting longer term planning.

4 In Work Poverty

- 4.1 People who are in work and suffering from hardship are emerging as a cohort of resident in need. This group is largely unable to access additional benefits support but can fall into crisis. It is however understood that working tax credit has increased and this may have an impact. In recognition of this, it is proposed that a separate 'In Work Poverty Hardship Fund' be created using an underspend on £42,000 on members allowances from the last financial year which is being carried forward as part of the year end process. Details on the scheme and how it can be accessed will be developed and communicated should the proposal be supported. The demand for support will be kept under review and options to further supplement the fund may need to be considered in the future should demand be greater than the funding available.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- To note the allocation of £1.888m hardship monies to the council and the criteria on which is to be allocated.
- Note the forecast expenditure of £1.545m on the funds and the remaining unallocated amount of £0.343m
- Agree the proposals to allocate the remaining £0.343k as follows:
 - £100k to the councils existing hardship fund so that is used to provide emergency support to those in crisis;
 - £50k match funding to support the council's proposals to maximise access to the welfare system and take-up of benefits through partnership working with the citizen's advice bureau;
- £193k to support those in need of additional welfare support – to be allocated throughout the year based subject to the availability of funding.
- To develop a Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau to work in partnership with the council to support those trying to access the welfare systems and to maximise their benefits and that the solution utilises the one-off monies made available as part of the 2020/21 budget resolution.
- To note the potential impact on the council tax income of increased eligibility for the Council Tax Support Scheme and that this is currently a financial risk that will need to be managed and monitored throughout the year.
- To note the existing flexibilities regarding the payment of council tax to support those who are experiencing financial problems;

- To approve the creation of an 'In Work Poverty Hardship Fund' by utilising a balance of £42,000 carried forward from the 2019/20 financial year from members allowances. Note that subject to approval that details on the criteria of the scheme and access arrangements to come forward.

Appendix A - Annex 1

Government Advice in terms of how the Hardship Grant should be used to support Council Tax bills

The following extract is taken from the Government's guidance to local authorities received on 24 March 2020.

Underpinning Principles

As part of its response to COVID-19, the Government announced in the Budget on 11 March that it would provide local authorities in England with £500m of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. The expectation is that the majority of the hardship fund will be used to provide council tax relief, alongside existing local council tax support schemes. This funding is distinct from the £5bn COVID-19 response fund to support public services.

The Government recognises that COVID-19 is likely to cause fluctuations in household incomes and recognises that, as a result, some individuals may struggle to meet council tax payments. Councils will already have established their local council tax support schemes for 2020-21.

The Government therefore expects that billing authorities will primarily use their grant allocation to reduce the council tax liability of individuals in their area, using their discretionary powers under s13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Councils may also want to use some funding to deliver increased financial assistance through other local support mechanisms, having considered local circumstances.

Councils should expedite provision of support to individuals in their area, using existing policies and schemes to deliver assistance where practical. Where council clearance processes are considered necessary, to avoid delays, they should be kept as light touch as possible within the governance arrangements of each authority.

Council tax reductions should be applied as soon as possible from the beginning of the 2020-21 financial year and billing authorities should rebill council taxpayers as quickly as practical. Authorities will want to make the local population aware of how the grant support package will be delivered, e.g. through providing information on their websites.

The Government has confirmed that it will fund billing authorities in full for the new burdens cost for delivering the support.

Local authorities will wish to maintain a record of grant expenditure under this scheme, both through the council tax system and their own local support mechanisms.

It is the Government's intention that any assistance provided from the council tax hardship fund will not affect the eligibility of recipients for other benefits.

Minimum reduction in council tax liability for working age local council tax support claimants

The Government's strong expectation is that billing authorities will provide all recipients of working age local council tax support ('LCTS') during the financial year 2020-21 with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150, using their discretionary powers to reduce the liability of council tax payers outside of their formal LCTS scheme design.

Where a taxpayer's liability for 2020-21 is, following the application of council tax support, less than £150, then their liability would be reduced to nil. Where a taxpayer's liability for 2020-21 is nil, no reduction to the council tax bill will be available.

There should be no need for any recipient of LCTS to make a separate claim for a reduction under this scheme. The billing authority should assess who is eligible for support from the hardship fund and automatically rebill those council taxpayers.

Whether or not a taxpayer has been affected by COVID-19, directly or indirectly, should not be taken into account in assessing eligibility for this reduction.

The Government is keen to ensure that support is provided as quickly as possible to individuals who are eligible. It therefore considers that there is a strong case for councils to provide the support up front to enable the maximum benefit to be delivered promptly. However, the Government recognises that in some cases, authorities may consider that the most effective assistance could be profiled across the year.

Wider consideration – additional discretionary support

The Government recognises that existing support mechanisms vary locally, including LCTS schemes, discretionary council tax discount/hardship schemes and local welfare schemes.

Having allocated grant to reduce the council tax bill of working age LCTS recipients by a further £150, billing authorities should establish their own local approach to using any remaining grant to assist those in need. Billing authorities will want to revisit their broader approach at intervals during the financial year, in order to ensure expenditure for 2020-21 remains within their allocation.

In determining any broader approach to delivering support, authorities are best placed to reflect on the financial needs of their most vulnerable residents. In doing so, they may wish to consider using their remaining grant allocation as part of wider local support mechanisms. These may include, but are not restricted to:

- Council tax relief using existing discretionary discount/hardship policies (adapted where necessary in order to capture those most likely to be affected by COVID-19); and*
- Additional support outside the council tax system through Local Welfare or similar schemes;*
- A higher level of council tax reduction for those working age LCTS recipients whose annual liability exceeds £150.*

Bury Response to Hardship Support for Businesses

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In recognition of the economic impact to businesses of the COVID-19 crisis, the Government has made a series of announcements designed to stabilise the situation, with a package of support including: agreement to pay the wages of staff who would otherwise have been made redundant, access loans, additional business rates reliefs to the retail, leisure and hospitality sector and one-off grants to smaller businesses.
- 1.2 The support announced has been welcomed by the business community but there are concerns that financial assistance is not reaching businesses quickly enough and that, in some instances, no support is available. Of particular note is the lack of financial assistance to those individuals that are self employed.
- 1.3 In response to this, the council has already made some decisions to alleviate some of the financial pressures on targeted groups across the borough. From discussions with businesses and with the GM Growth Hub it has been established that it is essential that businesses know and understand what support is available and, more crucially, are supported in accessing it.
- 1.4 the approach adopted by Bury is to ensure that there is a single gateway for businesses to obtain information and that there is specific support available to those that need it through the Business, Growth and Investment Team.

2 Background

- 2.1 Support to businesses is available at a national, regional and local level. Details on the support that is available sit out in the following paragraphs.

National Response

- 2.2 The packages of measures to support businesses announced include:
 - A statutory sick pay relief package to SMEs
 - A 12 month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England. This has subsequently been extended to include estate agents, bingo halls and letting agents following the additional measures imposed by the government earlier this week.
 - Small business grant funding of support for businesses in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief. Grant of £10,000 for these businesses who previously received full relief
 - Grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
 - exemption from business rates in 2020/21 for larger retail, hospitality and leisure premises;
 - a business rates holiday for private childcare providers in 2020/21.
 - The coronavirus business interruption loan scheme to support long-term viable businesses who may need to respond to cash flow pressures by seeking additional finance
 - The HMRC time to pay scheme for VAT;
 - Debt relief facilities for larger companies via the Treasury

Business Rates Reliefs

- 2.3 The council's business rates system has been updated to reflect the new guidance and new bills are being re-issued from 25 March 2020. This is in line with government expectations. All businesses affected have been rebilled.

Grants to Small Businesses

- 2.4 Payment of grants commenced on 1 April in line with government expectations. The progress as of 14 April 2020 is set out in the table below.

	Received (No)	Paid (No)	Paid (£m)	In Progress (No)	Query (No)
Applications	1,595	1,267	14.290	256	180
Of Which:					
£10k Grants		1,159	11.590		
£25k Grants		108	2.700		
TOTAL		1,267	14.290		

- Based on our assessment of how many grants will be payable:
 - 37% of all anticipated grant monies has been processed
 - 1823 business have yet to make contact
 - Letters are to be issued this week to all businesses that have yet to make contact although further promotion of the need to complete the e-form on the council's website is still needed. This has only recently become an option following an upgrade to the CIVICA revenues and benefits system.
- 2.5 Details on the government schemes have been collated and can be accessed via the council's website. Sign-posting of support and support on how this can be accessed is In addition to this, the Greater Manchester Growth Hub has produced some dedicated guidance to support businesses across the whole of the GM and this is available to Bury businesses too.

Regional Response

- 2.6 The Greater Manchester authorities have been working collectively on the issue of business support and resilience. Most Local Authorities have taken the view that they will not seek to introduce their own programmes, some saying that they will wait and see if there are any obvious 'gaps' in the national programmes, others taking the view that energies are best focussed upon ensuring wide take-up of national programmes within their Borough.
- 2.7 The Greater Manchester Growth Hub, of which Bury is a member, has produced a dedicated website to the support and is also establishing a contact centre specifically designed to support those businesses across GM that are experiencing financial problems. The offer from the M Growth Hub is still developing and officers are engaged on an ongoing basis to ensure that developments are fully understood and can be communicated to businesses across the borough.
- 2.8 One-off funding of £3m has been announced by the Growth Hub. Details on eligibility for the fund and the basis on which it will be allocated are still being developed. As and when more detail emerges, Bury council will be working with the Growth Hub and its businesses to ensure that Bury benefits from the

funding that is being made available. Cabinet will be updated as and when more information becomes available.

Bury Council

- 2.9 The Council has created a team to help respond to crisis within the BGI directorate. The team are acting as a bridge between national, regional and local co-ordination of response to the emergency.
- 2.10 We are currently working on intervention options to support targeted parts of the Bury business community. There are key businesses in the Borough who if they were to fold the Borough would lose their productive capacity and employment for good. This would have serious implications for the health of the Boroughs economic base and our capacity for recovery. This will be a focus for our next phase of work beyond the initial financial reliefs identified in this paper.
- 2.11 Some targeted support for traders in Bury market through rent reliefs and rent reliefs for those businesses that occupy the council's commercial properties and are able to demonstrate financial hardship have already been announced. These reliefs have been made for a 2 month period after which a further assessment of the economic impact will need to be made.
- 2.12 Deloittes have been commissioned to deliver a short piece of work aimed at identifying the most vulnerable businesses in Bury and enabling them to access the support that they need now. In doing so, we will be also be identifying what support businesses need and doing our utmost to ensure as many of our businesses and jobs survive the crisis. This will be captured through the use of specially designed questionnaires and too-kits. It is envisaged that the information will also be useful in the recovery phase and how businesses can be best supported once there is some easing of the current arrangements.
- 2.13 There are some gaps in the support for all businesses and any response from the council has to be proportionate and in line with the funding that is currently available. Small grants to businesses have been considered however as no additional funding has been made available the level of any offer is unlikely to have a significant impact on individual businesses. Analysis from the Deloittes work will however inform any future needs and interventions but at this stage the support is focussed on ensuring businesses are informed and supported to access the funding streams and mechanisms that have been made available by the government.
- 2.14 We will utilise the modelling done by Cambridge Economics earlier this year on the resilience of the Bury economy as the basis of a post-Covid 19 economic recovery plan for the Bury business sector. It is likely that many companies will find their balance sheets badly impaired by the impact of a shutdown, therefore, the level of private capital available to invest might be curtailed for a period after the virus has been removed. This will put the pressure on key public sector actors to help drive, create and stimulate investment opportunities going forwards.
- 2.15 It will also be important to develop a recovery plan for once economic life returns to some kind of normality. The medium-term impacts of this shutdown will take a while to crystallise, however, it is possible that trends already present, such as the move to online from physical retail will fasten further pressuring retail and service centres. The importance of driving forwards our

major regeneration proposals for central Bury, Radcliffe and Prestwich will be a critical element of a recovery.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the report. Additional support that is already being provided by the council has been subject to previous reports and the financial implications were considered at that time.
- 3.2 The council needs to maintain a balance of ensuring those that can pay should continue to do so and that any support is offered to those that need it. Overall the council is facing a significant financial challenge as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and initial support from the government is not enough to cover the overall financial risk. Further funding and support has been promised but as yet has not been announced and therefore there remains a significant financial risk to the council

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Cabinet is asked to note the support to businesses that is currently available and the mechanisms in which Bury businesses are able to access advice and support.

Contact Details:-

Lisa Kitto
Interim Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Bury Council | Town Hall | Bury | BL9 0EJ
[Email: l.kitto@bury.gov.uk](mailto:l.kitto@bury.gov.uk)

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COVID 19 – EMERGENCY POWERS GROUP

In attendance: Councillor D Jones (in the Chair)
 Councillor N Jones
 Councillor T Pickstone
 Councillor J Mason
 Councillor R Caserta
 Councillor A Simpson
 Councillor T Tariq

Officers: G Little – Chief Executive
 L Ridsdale - Deputy Chief Executive
 J Witkowski – Head of Legal Services
 M Woodhead - Section 151 Officer
 L Kitto – Interim Deputy Finance Officer
 J Gallagher – Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for Absence Dr J Schryer (CCG representative)

1. UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE EMERGENCY

Geoff Little provided an overview of work being undertaken across the Council and Health and social care sectors to address the Covid 19 emergency. The update including information in relation to the six key objectives. The Chief Executive informed members that there will still sufficient critical care bed capacity across GM and the Nightgale Centre has now accepted their first patients and will provide support to hospital via a step down service.

There has been an increase in Covid 19 cases in Care homes each Home has now a named GP. PPE for social care services still remains problematic and further work is needed, this will include working with partners in the Northern Care alliance.

Other work undertaken this week has included; 800 residents (500 in the last week) supported via the HUBS. GMP in enforcing the lock down is working with environmental health and trading standards and representatives from the Council's Licensing Department. Enforcement is generally good across the Borough with only minor problems including young people congregating in parks, small number of parties and similarly a small number of pubs allowing private drinking sessions – Officers have been adopting an approach of engagement first.

With regards to Business; there are £40 million pounds of grants available, £15million has been already distributed. An additional 3million pounds has been made available from GM to support smaller businesses. Additional support will be provided from Deloitte working together with Local authority staff, the primary aim will be to reach out to Bury Business - 327 of which have already been identified. 100 Council staff have been redeployed into community hubs. Plans are underway in respect of recovery and this will embed and capture the new ways of working. Members sought assurances that there was sufficient PPE equipment for the Boroughs Care Homes.

Responding to a question in respect of the use of volunteers, the deputy Chief Executive reported that the numbers of volunteers has increased and the Council is as of yet not making full use of the cohort as the demand is containable. Work is underway to develop the social engagement offer to the wider community including the NHS volunteers.

It was agreed:

The verbal update be noted.

2. VIRTUAL MEETINGS UPDATE

Janet Witkowski, Deputy Monitoring Officer provided Members with an update with regards to the Regulations which now enable Council Meetings to be held virtually.

The report contains details of proposals to include additional meetings of Cabinet and Health Scrutiny, as well as to continue with a scaled back Annual Meeting, scheduled to take place on the 20th May. The update included a commitment to a resumption of all Council meetings as soon as practicable.

Members sought assurances that the Council would ensure that Members had the necessary equipment to be able to fully engage in this process.

It was agreed:

The verbal update be noted.

3. FINANCE REPORT

Mike Woodhead provided a verbal update in respect of the current financial position of both the Council and CCG. The Section 151 Officer reported that it is difficult to accurately predict the financial picture at this stage, as, pressures are still emerging, additional funding unclear, duration and eventual impact of the crisis unknown. To give an idea of scale of the financial pressures - the Council's £5.4m share of the national £1.6b pot might need to cover - increased demand in ASC and Children's services, reduction in Council Tax income, reduction in Business Rates, reduction in rents, trading income, fees and charges.

It was agreed:

The report be noted and further updates be provided at future meetings.

4. SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS (EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS)

Members considered the following Urgent Council Decisions:
Bury Response – Hardship Support for Individuals and Businesses

It was agreed:

That in accordance with the Council Constitution's Special Urgency procedure, the Chair of Scrutiny and the Group Leaders agreed that the decisions detailed above could not be reasonably be deferred.

A decision notice will be published on the Council website.

5. **FOR INFORMATION - LIST OF COVID 19 RELATED OPERATIONAL DECISIONS**
6. **FOR INFORMATION - NOTES FROM THE LAST MEETING**
7. **EXEMPT REPORT – STRESS TESTING UPDATE**

COUNCILLOR D JONES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 3pm and ended at 4.15pm.)

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