



Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	The Cabinet
Meeting date:	11 November 2020
Title of report:	Covid-19 Response and Recovery Update
Report by:	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth; Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing; and Cabinet Member for Communities and Emergency Planning.
Decision Type:	Cabinet Non- Key Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

Executive Summary:

This report builds on previous reports to Cabinet; the latest being on 14 October 2020 and provides an overview of the current epidemiology of Covid-19 in Bury, an update on the implications of the current lockdown and local action being taken. The report also proposes a new six-month plan to guide the next phase of the Borough's action to suppress the pandemic, maintain health and care services and respond to the wider impacts on Bury people and businesses.

This report is circulated as a late item to cabinet. Key developments nationally have occurred within recent days and it is important that members are given the latest information on this fast moving emergency.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:-

1. Note the update and Bury's response to the Covid-19 emergency.
2. Note the proposed outline plan set out in this report for the next six months of Bury living with Covid, with a further report being submitted to the next Cabinet for approval.

1. Current restrictions

- 1.1 On Thursday, 5 November 2020 the Government introduced new national restrictions to replace the Local Covid Alert Level measures. The new measures apply nationally for up to four weeks up to and including Wednesday, 2 December. Government anticipate that at the end of that period there will be a return to a regional approach, based on the latest data. These measures are underpinned by law enforceable by the Police and other authorities.
- 1.2 The new measures seek to reduce the growth rate of the virus, which will:
- Prevent the NHS from being overwhelmed.
 - Ensure schools, colleges and universities can stay open.
 - Ensure that as many people as possible can continue to work.
- 1.3 A summary of the restrictions is described below. Full details can be found at www.gov.uk

Stay at home

- 1.4 You must not leave or be outside of your home except for specific purposes including leaving home for work or education purposes, or to provide voluntary or charitable services, where you cannot do this from home. Essential activities are permitted which include buying food or medicine, collecting items ordered through click-and-collect, obtaining or depositing money or accessing critical public services.
- 1.5 In general, you must not meet people socially but you can exercise in a public outdoor space with people you live with or with one other person, or you can exercise with your support bubble. There are certain circumstances in which you are allowed to meet others from outside your household or support bubble, but this should not be for socialising.
- 1.6 Overnight stays and holidays away will not be allowed in the UK or abroad, including staying in a second home or caravan, or staying with anyone you do not live with or are in a support bubble with.

Businesses and venues

- 1.7 The Government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close or restrict how they provide goods and services for example by offering a click-and-collect option. Examples include non-essential retail such as clothing and homeware stores, market stalls selling non-essential goods, hospitality venues such as cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars and social clubs, leisure centres, gyms, entertainment venues such as theatres, museums and galleries.

Education

- 1.8 Schools, colleges, and universities all remain open to prioritise the wellbeing and long-term futures of young people.

Weddings, civil partnerships, and funerals

- 1.9 Funerals can be attended by a maximum of 30 people. Linked funeral ceremonial events such as stone settings and ash scatterings can also continue with up to 15 people in attendance. Social distancing should be maintained between people who do not live together or share a support bubble. Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies will not be permitted to take place except where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover. These weddings are limited to 6 people.

Protecting people more at risk from coronavirus

- 1.10 There is specific advice for people over 60, people defined as clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable. This includes being especially careful to follow the rules and minimising contact with others. The Government is advising those who are defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable to work from home and not to go to work.

Visiting relatives in care homes

- 1.11 Receiving visitors is an important part of care home life. Maintaining some opportunities for visiting to take place is critical for supporting the health and wellbeing of residents and their relationships with friends and family. Specific guidance on care home visits has been published. Providers are best placed to decide how to deliver visits in their own setting in a way that meets the needs of their residents individually and collectively.

2. Local epidemiology

- 2.1 Although numbers of new cases have continued to increase in Bury, there is potentially now evidence of a slowing in the rate of increase.
- 2.2 During the week from Friday 30 October to Thursday 05 November 2020 there were 1113 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in people living in Bury (a rate of 585.5 cases per 100,000 people per week).
- 2.3 Covid-19 hospital activity continues to increase. Both Fairfield Hospital and North Manchester General Hospital now have more Covid-19 positive inpatients than at the peak of the first wave in April.
- 2.4 Bury Registrars recorded 21 Covid-19 deaths in Bury in the week to 05 November (an average of 3 per day).

3. The Bury response

- 3.1 The ten point plan of immediate priorities agreed at July Cabinet, which framed Bury's second phase of response to the pandemic, has resulted in positive activity being completed across all original priority areas, and regular updates have been provided to Members.
- 3.2 A new single Covid-19 plan for the next six months is now required to respond to the second wave of Covid-19 cases, the prospects of ongoing restrictions and to prepare for the emerging opportunities of mass testing and a vaccination programme. The new plan will be part of the overall Corporate Plan for the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Full details of the plan will be submitted to Cabinet for approval on 24 November, as part of the overall Corporate Plan.
- 3.3 The plan will be based on the following **four objectives**:
 1. To suppress Covid infection rates and death rates. This includes explaining, and where necessary, enforcing the lockdown and any future restrictions, working with national partners to improve the test, trace and isolate system including mass testing and to prepare for the roll out of a vaccination programme.
 2. To support the Bury health and care system to continue to meet demand - social care, primary care, community health and mental health as well as hospitals.
 3. To support Bury people and businesses to mitigate the harms caused by Covid-19 restrictions, including mental ill-health, businesses closed or curtailed, jobs lost, financial hardship, school days lost and risks to vulnerable children and families.
 4. To build strong relationships with Bury people and all public, voluntary and private sector partners to support each other through the challenge of Covid-19. This includes supporting the most clinically vulnerable to self-isolate.
- 3.4 All four of the objectives will involve targeting support for the most vulnerable cohorts, ages groups and neighbourhoods. Finally, the Council and Bury CCG will continue to maintain essential services to the public.

4. Suppressing Infection Rate

- 4.1 The announcement on 9th November that interim test results of a vaccine developed by Pfizer / BioTech suggest that it is 90% effective at protecting people against Covid is a hugely welcome development. However, there is a long way to go before this or other vaccines can be part of a long-term solution.

- 4.2 In the meantime officers in the One Commissioning Organisation are supporting work to ensure delivery of the vaccination programme. All Covid-19 vaccines will be procured nationally and distributed on a population basis to regions. The Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership have prepared plans which are being considered by the NHS at a North West level. A Bury Covid-19 Vaccination Task Group has been established to plan for and coordinate local delivery and ensure good uptake.
- 4.3 The prospect of a vaccination programme does not lessen the urgency of reducing and containing the virus here and now in Bury. The most important action for everyone to take is to follow the basic rules in order to help to reduce transmission of the virus and protect the vulnerable. This means protecting each other by washing hands, wearing face coverings and maintaining safe distancing. It also means adhering to the lockdown restrictions as set out in section 1 of this report and any continuing lockdown or other restrictions that will be introduced from 2 December.
- 4.4 The Council and its partners have taken extensive actions to engage Bury people and businesses to communicate and explain the current and previous restrictions and to encourage compliance. Where necessary Council officers will continue to work closely with Greater Manchester Police colleagues to take appropriate enforcement action. Relevant officers have now been authorised to enforce the new Covid-19 regulations covering the new lockdown.
- 4.5 A proposal has been submitted for Government funding for Covid-19 Marshalls. The Covid-19 Marshalls role will not be to enforce, but to further engage, explain and encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 4.6 The current levels of infection in the Bury community mean that testing, tracing the contacts of those who test positive and ensuring that people are self-isolating will have limited impact on transmission. However the test, track and isolate system still has a vital role to play and will become ever more important as the levels of infection come back down to manageable levels
- 4.7 There is good access locally to testing throughout the borough for the public. Discussions remain underway regarding the last Local Testing Site in Ramsbottom to determine the best location with the minimal disruption for local businesses and the public. Other sites set up include:-
- Radcliffe (Old Bath Car Park).
 - Whitefield Library.
 - Metro Christian Centre (Redvales).
 - Longfield centre Car Park (Prestwich).
 - Residents can also request Home Testing Kits through the post.
- 4.8 Testing for all key workers is available at Waterfold and there is sufficient capacity available. Additionally, support is available for staff testing programmes in the secondary health care sector.

- 4.9 A pilot of mass testing is being rolled out in Liverpool using new technology that provides test results within around 30 minutes. Regular testing is now available to everyone in Liverpool, including children and people who do not have symptoms. Other local areas, including Bury, will soon have access to the lateral flow test devices proving capacity for weekly tests of approximately 10% of the population. We are working collaboratively across Greater Manchester to develop our local approach to utilisation of this new testing technology. This may not necessarily be based on the same model as Liverpool. Further information on this initiative will be provided to Members as it develops.

5. Health and care

- 5.1 The health and care system in Bury and across Greater Manchester continues to be under significant pressure. The number of Covid-19 positive patients in Fairfield General over the last couple of weeks has routinely far exceeded (over 40%) more than at the peak of wave 1. In addition, the hospital has endeavoured to ensure the continuation of some elective care – in patients, cancer services, day cases and diagnostics, that in wave 1 had been suspended. Unfortunately, the Northern Care Alliance were forced to postpone elective care on Friday, in common with all other parts of Greater Manchester.
- 5.2 There are continuing pressures elsewhere in the health and care system such as social care, community health services and particularly in primary care. Like the hospital, much of this is a function of the demand, but there are also challenges of workforce availability due to self-isolation and infection.
- 5.3 Work is underway in re-prioritising in primary care, community nursing and social care in order to maintain services for patients and residents and support the overall position of the system.
- 5.4 Significant steps have been taken to support the hospital position particularly, including the increased community covid positive bed capacity at Gorsey Clough, Killelea and Spurr House. Northern Care Alliance are also reviewing as part of their business continuity planning the activity currently at Bealeys. Work is also continuing on exploring the utilisation of the Nightingale hospital in Manchester for Bury residents.
- 5.5 In the last week the command structure for the system has consolidated. A daily whole-system bronze command call each morning, a daily silver tactical call, and the establishment of a gold command meeting comprising clinical and political leadership and managerial leadership from the Council/CCG, hospital and Local Care Organisation.
- 5.6 Given that the impact on the health and care system lags 10 days or 2 weeks behind, any change in the reported incidence of Covid-19, it is expected that the challenging position will continue for some time in the health and care system.

6. Mitigating the impacts

6.1 Supporting business

6.1.1. Dissemination of key business-related messages are channelled through Bury Means Business weekly E-Bulletin and social media platforms, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Regular engagement with businesses is via the Bury Business Leadership Group.

6.1.2. A dedicated Bury Means Businesses single point of contact model for business queries is place through Investin@bury.gov.uk and this supports signposting to funded and quality business support including:-

- GM Growth Hub
- GM Here for Business
- Skill Support for the Workforce
- Enterprising You
- GM Chamber of Commerce
- Webinars, training and networking

6.1.3. The Government announced financial support for those businesses required to close for the 4-week period from 5 November until 2 December due to the national lockdown.

6.1.4. The main parts of the economic support package announced at the weekend were:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – also known as the furlough scheme – has been extended until December, with employees receiving 80 per cent of the current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. Employers will be asked to cover National Insurance and pension contributions. The Job Support Scheme has been postponed until the furlough scheme ends.
- Business premises forced to close by the lockdown, are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month, depending on their rateable value, under the Local Restrictions Support Grant. There is also a Grant Scheme for businesses that are still open but severely impacted by local restrictions.
- It has also been announced that the availability of mortgage holidays will be continued.

6.1.5. It was also announced that local authorities will be getting £1.1bn, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, to make one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly. The funding has been allocated to Greater Manchester Combined Authority and will be distributed to districts in line with the national formula. Local Authorities are required to develop discretionary schemes on how the funding can be accessed. Work is currently underway with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to design a scheme with common principles.

6.1.6. It is the Council's intention to design in quick-time a strategic proposal which can deliver resources to businesses most impacted by the re-imposition of a national lockdown. The Council's local discretionary fund will work alongside national funds, which have been designed to support those businesses forced to close because of the lockdown. The Council's strategy will be to continue supporting businesses heavily impacted by the renewed restrictions, this will include locally vital economic infrastructure such as Bury Market.

6.1.7. Across Greater Manchester a programme of business grant support is being developed which can be put in place at the end of the national lockdown, drawing the lessons from the discretionary schemes which districts put in place during the national lockdown earlier in the year.

6.2 Schools and Children

6.2.1 Whilst the Education Service has put in place a robust and resilient programme of Covid 19 support, we must recognise that Bury has a higher than national average number of vulnerable children. It has higher than national average levels of infection-related absence: both staff and pupils. The cumulative impact of these on children's learning must unavoidably pose a serious and significant risk to learning, to educational outcomes, and to life chances for our children and young people. There is a compelling inevitability to the growth in educational inequality for the children of Bury if we do not recognise and address the challenge.

6.2.2 It is no surprise therefore that each stage of learning in Bury: Primary, Secondary, and Further Education with Higher Education, has formally represented their continuing concerns to the Secretary of State for Education. The Council is working with other GM Councils and representatives of schools and further education colleges to engage government in discussions about assessment processes for 2021.

6.2.3 Free school meals have been shown to improve health and help tackle health inequalities. As part of a package to support families during the pandemic, the Council provided free school meals to almost 8,000 children over the half term holiday in October. The £15 vouchers continued the previous half-term and holiday support.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 Mental health services have played a crucial part in the system response to the second wave of Covid-19, most recently for example implementing their urgent care scheme and the 136 suite, which offers a place of safety, where individuals can be assessed by mental health professionals in a safe and appropriate setting.

- 6.3.2 More broadly, work is being undertaken to clarify and strengthen the range of interventions for residents and indeed staff to support mental health and wellbeing, as well assessing potential future demand and the capacity required.

7. Supporting communities

- 7.1 A comprehensive and sustained communications and engagement campaign has and continues to underpin our local action. The campaign uses multiple channels including social media, website press, radio, household leaflet distribution and outdoor marketing to ensure the people of Bury and key stakeholders are kept up to date on the latest position and are aware of the key messages. Councillors, staff and other stakeholders receive the weekly information update for their information and onward circulation through their distribution lists. This compliments the regular data circulation.
- 7.2 We are reviewing our approach to communications to make sure that it supports our ambition to build confidence and trust that we can safely restart and continue our economic and social lives. Communicating Bury's plan for the next six months will be a priority to help achieve this. We will also be gathering insight from residents to inform our comms and engagement activity to more effectively inspire and change behaviours. Through GM we will carry out monthly surveys to find out about Bury residents' attitudes and behaviours.
- 7.3 Shielding is not being reintroduced in the same form as the first lockdown, but as explained in section 1.10, those defined on medical grounds due to health reasons as clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to work from home and not to go to work, not to go to the shops or to pharmacies. The Government has recently written to all clinically extremely vulnerable residents with this advice and the Community Hubs will play a vital role in supporting communities and vulnerable residents.
- 7.4 To ensure that Bury residents are aware of the local offer of support, a local version of the letter is being sent out this week to circa 10k clinically extremely vulnerable residents encouraging them to register on the national shielding site to get access to supermarket slots. The letter also sets out details of the local offer including support with befriending, shopping, collecting medicines, GP practice information and how to get advice on money, debt and welfare benefits.
- 7.5 Calls from the community to the Covid-19 helpline in the Council's contact centre have risen and are currently manageable, but we expect a rise in demand once the Bury Council letter lands later this week. More people are expressing support requests via the national online system including requests for befriending, Adult Social Care assessments and requests for food parcels due to food poverty.

- 7.6 Working with Bury Voluntary, Community and Faith Alliance (VCFA), the Council is seeking to increase the number of volunteers that can support the humanitarian response. There has been a good response to the call out and some of the volunteers we used last time who have been furloughed again have also responded positively.

8. Business continuity

- 8.1 Business continuity arrangements are being invoked so that the Council can mobilise its staffing resources. Key changes include stepping back from some of our business support processes, re-prioritising activity in the contact centre, and closure of the Museum, Tourist Information Centre, Leisure and Wellness services.
- 8.2 National restrictions also mean the Registrars service will be prohibited from administering marriage and civil partnership ceremonies; available staff will be re-directed to death registration.
- 8.3 Only the food stalls will be permitted to remain open in the market; the Market Office will remain open to support Traders.
- 8.4 Services which were closed in the first lockdown, but which will remain open this time as a key part of the emergency response are:
- Adult education.
 - Staying Well service.
 - Services related to school support such as transport.
- 8.5 Services which were closed in the first lockdown but which will remain open at this time in the context of ongoing and in some cases increasingly demanding business as usual requirements are:-
- Grounds maintenance.
 - Waste recycling centres.
 - Health and safety teams.
 - Elections and land charges services.
 - Emergency response functions.
- 8.6 There has been an increase in wellbeing and support for staff. Managers have been asked to hold regular keep in touch session with their teams, staff are being encouraged to have breaks between meetings, taking lunch breaks and mental health support is available. A regular briefing with the Chief Executive commences next week.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The further developments in relation to Covid will continue to be reported to Members as the situation develops.
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Community impact/links with Community Strategy

The plan for living with Covid for the next six months an intrinsic part of the new corporate plan, which outlines the Council and CCG's contribution to the Bury 2030 Strategy.

Equality Impact and considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

Equality Analysis	An Equality Impact Assessment of the Covid-19 Local Outbreak Plan has been undertaken.
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Assessment of Risk:

The following risks apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Covid-19 exposes and worsens inequalities and people in Bury have lived with the restrictions for longer than other areas, thus seeing a greater impact on deprivation than other areas.	The requirement to focus on deprived neighbourhoods and vulnerable cohorts including age groups, ethnicity and faith will be key over the next six months and longer term.
Harms caused by Covid-19 restrictions: mental health, business closed or curtailed, jobs lost, financial hardship, school days lost.	New six month plan and longer term Bury Strategy actions. The Town Centre Recovery Boards Targeted support to Bury businesses.

Consultation:

None.

Legal Implications:

The Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act and as such is at the core of the response to meet the Covid-19 emergency. The Council is subject to a full set of civil protection duties including putting in place emergency plans, business continuity and public information arrangements, all in cooperation with other local responders.

The Council also has duties and powers in relation to public service provision and enforcement. The changes in legislation and guidance must be constantly monitored and the Council must not only comply with the law and have regard to guidance issued by the government, it must work with other agencies to ensure compliance. At the present time a balance must be struck between those duties and powers and the need to comply with legislative restrictions connected with Covid-19 and its health and safety obligations. The report identifies those ongoing and changing obligations and the plans and actions being taken to address them.

Financial Implications:

The Government has made available some additional funding to support Local Authorities with the impact of Covid. This includes funding to support business affected by the pandemic. Schemes for businesses are being designed in line with government criteria and to ensure that they are affordable within the funding made available. The impact of Covid has significantly affected the Council's financial position and continues to be monitored on a monthly basis. The emerging gap and increased demand is being reflected in the Council's medium term financial strategy.

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Background papers:

Previous Cabinet reports on Covid.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
GM	Greater Manchester
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
OCO	One Commissioning Organisation
SME	Small Medium Enterprise (SME) business