

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Council **DATE:** 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR DECISION**

#### **COVID-19 DECISIONS UPDATE**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this Report is to inform Council of the time line of the major events since the last Report to the Council on this subject on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020, and of the further significant decisions taken by officers, and to seek ratification of those decisions.

##### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Council is asked to note this Report, and to ratify the significant decisions taken by officers since the last report on this subject to Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020, as set out in the Appendices to this Report.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

The decisions taken by officers and set out in this Report have sought to support, as far as reasonably practicable at the present time, the objectives of the [Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy](#) (SJWS) and the Five Year Plan

##### **3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities –**

The decisions set out in this Report have been taken with the over arching objective of protecting public health and the well being of residents and ensuring that the Council is able to achieve this objective lawfully, and as effectively as possible, in the prevailing circumstances. The recommendations contained in this report seek to ensure that the Council are able to continue to try to meet this objective and thereby be in a position to continue to address the priorities of the SJWS and the JSNA appropriately.

##### **3b Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The recommendations contained in this Report, namely the noting and ratification of the further significant decisions taken by officers, by Cabinet, at the first available opportunity, will enable the Council to be in a position to be able to go forwards to try and continue to meet the following objectives of the Five Year Plan.

- *Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives.*

- *Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs.*
- *Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit.*
- *Our residents will have access to good quality homes.*
- *Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide jobs and opportunities for our residents*

#### 4 **Other Implications**

##### (a) **Financial**

Any financial implications of significant decisions taken by officers in connection with the need to deal with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are monitored weekly by a special finance group and will be reported to cabinet as part of the usual financial reports to cabinet.

##### **Risk Management**

| Recommendation from section 2 above  | Risks/Threats/ Opportunities   | Current Controls   | Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk                                   | Future Controls  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| That the Cabinet note and ratify the significant decisions taken by officers since the “lockdown” came into force. | Failure by Members to note and ratify these actions and decisions increases the risk of challenge and disruption. Ratification provides the opportunity for the Council to build upon the good results already achieved and to move forward strongly by building upon these results with greater engagement across the Council | The significant decisions and actions have been taken in accordance with governance arrangements put into place in consultation with the Council’s statutory officers and in accordance with all applicable guidance issued by and best practice recommended by all relevant bodies. | Likelihood – Very Low – 2<br><br>Legal/ Regulatory – Critical - 3<br><br>Score: 6 | Increasing return to usual decision making structures and processes as circumstances permit. |

##### (b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

Any decisions taken by officers pursuant to the statutory regulations enacted by the Government to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic, to enforce business closures and restrict assembly, could potentially be

challenged under the Human Rights Act 1998 as being a breach of article 11, relating to the freedom of assembly and association, and of Article 1 of the First Protocol to that convention, relating to the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions. It is considered, however, that risks of successful challenge are low as, in the latter case, derogations are permitted to control use of property in the general interest and, in the former case, for the protection of public health.

Under the Council's Constitution, the Chief Executive has delegated power to act in case of emergency and urgency to exercise all council functions. Additionally, under the constitution, all matters not specifically reserved are deemed to be within the delegated authority of the Chief Executive and Directors for all purposes which fall within their directorate or budget area, or area of responsibility to which they may be nominated from time to time.

The Cabinet may ratify any decisions of officers falling within their functions.

(c) *Equalities Impact Assessment*

All the significant decisions set out in this Report were taken having regard, so far as was practicable in the circumstances, to the public sector equality duties and the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

(d) Workforce

The decisions taken by officers which have affected the Workforce are set out in the schedule to this Report.

(e) Property

The restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus Act 2020 on the ability of the Council as a landowner to take action to enforce payments of rents will have had an effect on the Council's asset management position. Any long term effects on the Council's property portfolio and asset management strategy evaluated and reported to the cabinet as part of the Council's normal financial reporting to the cabinet.

(f) Carbon Emissions and Energy Costs

The Council have not at present carried out any systematic analysis of the effect on carbon emissions and energy costs of the decisions taken by officers since the "lockdown" took effect. It is considered that it is self-evident, however, that the restrictions on travel and the reduction in the use and occupation of Council premises and other council activities means that it is unlikely that there was an increase in emissions and energy costs during this period.

## 5 **Supporting Information**

### 5.1 **Time Line of Events**

- 5.1.1 26 August 2020 - BBC survey of UK's largest employers indicates no plans to return all staff to their offices
- 5.1.2 26 August 2020 - Restaurant chains including Prezzo's, Harvester and Pizza Pilgrim announce plans to continue "eat out to help out" scheme regardless of ending of government funding.
- 5.1.3 27 August 2020 – number of new daily covid-19 cases rises to 1,522
- 5.1.4 27 August 2020 – Pret A Manger, a sandwich chain, announces loss of 3000 jobs in bid to save the business
- 5.1.5 27 August 2020 – Royal Shakespeare Company cancels all productions until 2021 due to pandemic
- 5.1.6 28 August 2020 – UK Government launches new drive to encourage people to return to their places of work from beginning of September.
- 5.1.7 29 August 2020 – First football match with spectators takes place in Brighton with 2,500 spectators allowed in.
- 5.1.8 30 August 2020 – as a million students start planning to return to University, universities and colleges union calls for ban on face to face lectures until after Christmas, to stop spread of the virus.
- 5.1.9 30 August 2020 – a further 1,715 cases of covid-19 reported taking total to 334,467, largest daily increase since mid May.
- 5.1.10 31 August 2020 – "Eat Out To Help Out Scheme" ends – total cost £552 million
- 5.1.11 1 September 2020 – Majority of school in England, Wales and Northern Ireland re-open.
- 5.1.12 1 September 2020 – workers on low incomes in areas of high numbers of covid-19 cases who cannot work from home and are required to self isolate become entitled to new payment to top up universal credit or working tax credit.
- 5.1.13 1 September 2020 – companies using government furlough scheme become subject to higher contributions towards workers' wages as scheme comes to an end.
- 5.1.14 1 September 2020 -Manchester United Footballer Marcus Rashford forms task force with leading food brands to tackle child food poverty.
- 5.1.15 2 September 2020 – Chancellor of the Exchequer gives reassurance that there will not be "horror show of taxes with no end in sight" to tackle financial impact of the pandemic.

- 5.1.16 3 September 2020 – Baroness Dido Harding, new Head of NHS Test & Trace, apologises after it emerges laboratories are struggling to keep with demand for tests and people are asked to travel hundred of miles to have tests.
- 5.1.17 3 September 2020 -Health Secretary Matt Hancock announces £500 million for trials on a 20 minute covid-19 test.
- 5.1.18 4 September 2020 – Virgin Atlantic announces further loss of 1,150 jobs as part of its rescue package.
- 5.1.19 5 September 2020 – in letter sent to Heads of Departments, UK government urges them to get civil servants back to their desks as soon as possible.
- 5.1.20 6 September 2020 – a further 2,988 covid-19 cases are reported – highest number since 22 May
- 5.1.21 8 September 2020 – Health Secretary Matt Hancock expresses concern at rise in number of cases. Government announces ban on gatherings of more than six people from 14 September.
- 5.1.22 8 September 2020 – UK records 2,460 new cases and 30 deaths.
- 5.1.23 9 September 2020 – Prime Minister announces “moonshot” plan for vastly expanded mass testing plan.
- 5.1. 24 11 September 2020 – “R” number rises to between 1.00 and 1.2 for first time since March.
- 5.1.25 12 September 2020 – Former Chief Scientific Officer warns about loss of control over virus as number of cases exceed 3,000 for two consecutive days.
- 5.1.26 13 September 2020 - Food outlets including Deliveroo call for extension on moratorium for evictions for non-payment of rent on commercial premises which is due to end on 30 September.
- 5.1.27 15 September 2020 – figures announced show unemployment rose 4.1% for three month period ending in July
- 5.1.28 16 September 2020 – Prime minister appearing before select committee says new national lockdown would have disastrous financial consequence for UK and everything in the government’s power being done to avoid that.
- 5.1.29 17 September 2020 – Baroness Dido Harding of NHS Test & Trace tells committee of MPs that demand for testing significantly outstripping capacity but confident daily testing capacity can be raised by 500,000 by end of October.
- 5.1.30 18 September 2020 – “R” number rises to between 1.00 and 1.4.
- 5.1.31 20 September 2020 – reports that 1,000 jobs at Butlins at risk when furlough scheme ends,

- 5.1.32 21 September 2020 – Sir Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Adviser, says could be as many as 50,000 covid-19 cases per day by mid October if no further action taken leading to 200 deaths per day.
- 5.1.33 21 September 2020 – UK Alert Level upgraded to 4, meaning transmission is high and rising exponentially.
- 5.1.34 23 September 2020 – 6,178 new cases reported. Highest since 1 May.
- 5.1.35 23 September 2020 – Government scraps plans for autumn budget due to pandemic.
- 5.1.36 24 September 2020 – 6,634 new cases announced.
- 5.1.37 25 September 2020 – “R” number rises from 1.1-1.4 to 1.2-1.5
- 5.1.38 26 September 2020 – Prime Minister announces £500 million for global vaccine sharing scheme.
- 5.1.39 29 September 2020 - Baker chain Greggs announces it is consulting with unions about job cuts once furlough scheme ends.
- 5.1.40 29 September 2020 – UK announces 7,143 new cases with 71 covid related deaths, highest since 1 July.
- 5.1.41 1 October 2020 – study by Imperial College London suggests spread of virus may be slowing and “R” number may have reduced since introduction of Rule of 6” but warns infections still high at 1 in 200 people.
- 5.1.42. 1 October 2020 – BBC reports covid restrictions to be simplified into new 3 tier system.
- 5.1.43 2 October 2020 – figures suggest 16.8 million people in UK in local lockdowns – 23% in England, 76% in Wales and 32% in Scotland.
- 5.1.44 3 October 2020 – number of new daily cases rises above 10,000 with further 12,872 cases confirmed.
- 5.1.45 4 October 2020 – further 22,961 cases confirmed taking total to 502,978.
- 5.1.46 4 October 2020 – Health Secretary Matt Hancock announces Army will be called in to help distribute vaccine as soon as it is ready for distribution.
- 5.1.47 5 October 2020 – at annual part conference Chancellor of the Exchequer announces he will “always balance the books” despite increased government spending necessitated by pandemic.
- 5.1.48 6 October 2020 – UK record further 14,542 cases and 76 deaths.
- 5.1.49 6 October 2020 – Pub retailer Greene King announces 800 job losses and closure of 79 pubs, a third of them on a permanent basis.
- 5.1.50 8 October 2020 – Strictly Come Dancing’s live arena tour postponed till 2022 due to pandemic.

- 5.1.51 9 October 2020 – figures show UK economy grew 2.1% in August, aided by “Eat Out to Help Out” scheme but figures below expectations.
- 5.1.52 11 October 2020 – Leading UK Scientist Peter Horby warns UK at “precarious point” and new National Lockdown a possibility but all must be done to avoid that.
- 5.1.53 12 October 2020 – Prime Minister announces new 3 tier lockdown system taking effect on 14 October. Newly released papers show SAGE recommend short “circuit breaker” for England in September.
- 5.54 13 October 2020 – figures show UK unemployment had risen to highest level since 2017 with increase of 4.5% in three months up to August 2020.
- 5.55 14 October 2020 – 3 tier system comes into force. Liverpool region first to be allocated to highest tier.
- 5.56 16 October 2020 – ONS estimates 27,900 new covid cases a day in England 60% increase over previous week and rise in “R” number between 1.3 and 1.5
- 5.57. 16 October 2020 – Wales announces ban on travel into Wales from other UK covid-19 hotspots.
- 5.58 19 October 2020 – 18,804 new cases in UK as a whole announced with 80 fatalities.
- 5.59 20 October 2020 – 241 covid-19 related deaths are recorded. Highest for several months.
- 5.60 21 October 2020 – further 26,668 cases recorded. Highest daily recorded so far.
- 5.61 22 October 2020 – Chancellor of the Exchequer announces increased support for jobs and workers worst affected by restrictions with employers paying less and workers able to work fewer hours before qualifying.
- 5.63 23 October 2020 – ONS estimated 35,200 daily cases in England, 25% increase over previous week.
- 5.64 26 October 2020 – Pharmacy Chain Boots announces it will make available a test that can give results in 12 minutes. Produced by LumiraDx it will cost £120.
- 5.65 26 October 2020. Scientists announce Oxford University covid-19 trial vaccine shows “strong immune response” among elderly volunteers.
- 5.66 27 October 2020 – Study by Imperial College London and Ipsos Mori suggests covid-19 anti-bodies may last a matter of months and number of people with anti-bodies has fallen by 26.5% over three months.
- 5.67. 27 October 2020 – UK records 367 deaths, higher daily number since May.

- 5.68 28 October 2020 – Projection by SAGE suggests deaths from Covid-19 will remain high over winter, leading to greater number of deaths than was seen earlier in the year.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

The Cabinet considered a version of this report at its meetings on 12<sup>th</sup> October and 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and ratified the significant decisions insofar as they related to executive functions.

7 **Conclusion**

This Report brings the Council up to date with major events since the last report. The noting and ratification of those decisions by the Council, at the first available opportunity, will enable the Council to continue to seek to meet its duties to protect public health and to serve the well being of those who live, work and visit its area.

8 **Appendices Attached**

Appendix - Table of significant decisions

9 **Background Papers**

None