



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>I</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Dacorum Borough Council's Planning and Response to Covid-19</b>
Contact:	Sally Marshall, Chief Executive  Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration)  James Deane, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations)
Purpose of report:	To provide Council with a comprehensive update on the Council's response to Covid-19.
Recommendations:	That Council note the Council's initial and planned response to Covid-19 as set out in the report.
Corporate Objectives:	The Council's response to Covid-19 will support all of the Council's Corporate Objectives.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u>  Financial implications are covered under section 4 Finance and Resources.  <u>Value for Money</u>  The Council's response to Covid-19 will have various value for money implications which will be assessed as proposals develop to respond to the issues raised.  The Council's initial response has focused on continuity of service provision and support for key groups and organisations – the measures implemented are aimed at assisting the recovery and minimising the long terms impacts as much as possible.
Risk Implications	Failure to have an efficient and effective emergency plan and service response to deal with issues related to Covid-19

	will have significant financial and community risks for the Council, its residents and businesses.
Community Impact Assessment	The Council's response to date has tried to ensure minimal service disruption to the community. The recovery phase of the Council's response will continually assess its impact on the community to ensure a balanced and effective response.
Health And Safety Implications	The Council has acted promptly and put in place appropriate measures to ensure that staff, councillors and the community are protected from Covid-19 whilst trying to ensure minimal service disruption.
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p><b>Monitoring Officer:</b></p> <p>A raft of new legislation have been implemented to deal with Covid-19. These include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coronavirus Act 2020</li> <li>- The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020</li> <li>- Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020</li> <li>- The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020</li> </ul> <p>The Monitoring Officer continues to monitor the key issues raised by the legislative changes and relevant government guidance and ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place to assist services to continue to deliver during the crisis and subsequent recovery phase.</p> <p><b>S.151 Officer</b></p> <p>Although the financial implications of the Council's COVID19 response are likely to be significant, it is still too early to model a meaningful forecast at this stage.</p> <p>Similarly, although Government has stated that financial recompense for councils is likely to be available, there has not yet been any commitment as to when this might be available or indeed the quantum of any financial support package.</p> <p>My comments on the immediate financial considerations of the Council are contained within the section of this report entitled Finance &amp; Resources.</p> <p>The S151 officer will continue to monitor the situation, track costs, and will report back to Members as a clearer position of the financial implications begins to emerge.</p>
Consultees:	Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration

	James Deane, Corporate Director Finance & Operations Mark Brookes, Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services
Background papers:	Coronavirus Covid-19: Guidance for Local Government Procurement Policy Note 02/20 – Supplier Relief due to Covid-19
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None

## 1. Background

This report has been submitted to Council under urgent circumstances and has therefore not followed standard approval processes. The report details the work that the Council are undertaking and plan to undertake, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The contents of the report are based on circumstances that are changing frequently and therefore submission immediately prior to publication is appropriate, and many areas are likely to become superseded by new information on an ongoing basis.

## 2. International & National Position

### Context

- 2.1. On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, China. The cause is now identified as a Coronavirus, one of the family of viruses which causes the SARS (Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002-2003 across the world. These viruses are fairly common and can range from mild to very severe in effect. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that infect a wide range of different species including humans.
- 2.2. Coronaviruses are thought to have originated in animals. They are transmitted via droplets in coughs and sneezes. The droplets can survive on different types of surfaces for varying amounts of time.
- 2.3. On Tuesday 10th February, the WHO named the disease caused by the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The virus itself has been named SARS-CoV-2, as the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) have determined that it is the same species as SARS but a different and milder strain of the species.

### Level of severity

- 2.4. As at 9 April 2020 there have been 844 persons reported as being diagnosed with Covid-19 and 55 fatalities within Hertfordshire.
- 2.5. Current estimates (though these vary) are that 81% of people infected will have the milder form of illness, with 14% more severe and needing greater care, up to 5% critically ill and needing very specialist care.
- 2.6. Although the virus can infect anybody, the following categories of people are considered to be at high risk:-
  - aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
  - under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
    - chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
    - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure

- chronic kidney disease
  - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
  - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
  - diabetes
  - problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
  - a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
  - being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

### **3. Dacorum Borough Council Response**

#### **Strategic Position**

- 3.1 A major emergency has been declared under the Council's Emergency Plan. The Incident Management Team chaired by the Chief Executive is meeting on a daily basis to discuss areas of concern and issues. Risks have been identified and actions have been put in place to ensure delivery of priority services to our communities. Business Continuity Plans have been reviewed and updated accordingly. The Council is linked and coordinated with the county emergency planning process through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which is leading on the Emergency across Hertfordshire.
- 2.4 The Chief Executive is taking part in a range of Local, Regional and National conference calls which include: The Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG); Local Government Association; District Council Network; Eastern Region Chief Executive Group and the Hertfordshire Chief Executive Co-Ordinating Group.
- 2.5 The Hertfordshire Chief Executive Co-Ordinating Group has taken on responsibility for the Recovery Co-ordination Cell (reporting into the LRF), and has oversight (as part of this work-stream) of the Economic Resilience Cell, the Community Reassurance Cell and the Communications Cell.
- 2.6 The Leader of the Council has also taken part in teleconferences on behalf of the Council with the Secretary of State for MHCLG and the Hertfordshire Leaders Group.
- 2.7 All directorates have completed a facilitated exercise on the risks associated with Covid-19 using the national and local planning assumptions, these exercises have identified the following organisational risks:-
- Shortages of staff due to illness and carers responsibilities
  - Shortages of members to be able to attend committee meetings due to illness and carers responsibilities

- Pressures on technology and infrastructure
- Potential issues with third party service providers and partner organisations
- Shortages of PHE to frontline staff

3.6 These risks form the corner stone of our planning and Business Impact assessments and all directorates are assessing these risks against the Business continuity requirements offer continued service delivery.

## **Actions being taken corporately in response to Covid-19**

### **3. Finance and Operations**

#### **4.1 Finance and Resources**

The following paragraphs provide a high-level summary of the key work undertaken by the Finance & Resources team over the course of the last three weeks; the work that is currently being undertaken and some of the key financial issues that will need to be considered by the Council over the coming months. More specific detail around the support packages for business are on the Council's Covid19 page: [http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-advice-and-updates](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-(covid-19)-advice-and-updates)

- All teams are involved in the implementation of the **Government support package** for businesses, which roughly comprises £48m across the borough (£20m of rate reliefs and £28m of one-off grants). Reliefs have been applied automatically, and, in line with Government guidance, we have written to all businesses eligible for grants, requesting the necessary details for payment to be made. Companies respond by providing their details and necessary confirmations through a newly designed portal on the DBC website. As at 9 April, the Council had received responses from around 1,300 businesses of the 2,100 it has written to, and 370 (totalling £4m) will have been paid by the end of the day. Additional payment runs have been put in place, and a further 200 businesses are expected to be paid on Tuesday with an estimated value of £2m.
- DBC has been allocated £1m of Government's **Council Tax Hardship Fund**, which will reduce by £150 the Council Tax bills of all those of working age in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTS). Initially this will benefit around 2,100 residents, and is likely to leave a residual balance from the Government funding. However, over the next few months significant growth in the number of working age CTS claimants is expected, and more of the funding to be applied throughout the year. Once there is greater stability on claims growth and there is more clarity on any remaining amounts, a report will come to Members with options on how best to utilise the balance.
- The Council's **cash-flow position** will not be affected by the implementation of the Government's schemes – the funding has already been received by the council.

- DBC has received around £60k as its share of Government's £1.6bn support package for Local Government. The Council is already facing **reduced income and increased expenditure** as a result of the virus, and this is likely to continue for many months. However, at this stage, too little is known about the duration or the impact of the virus to meaningfully forecast the scale of the budgetary pressure in 2020/21 (and beyond). The Finance team will continue to monitor the financial impact and will report back to Members immediately if there are any major financial shocks, but the ongoing plan is to pick up emerging trends through budget monitoring and to increase focus on modelling the in-year implications once we have more data.
- The Government has not yet committed to a definitive position around potential **future recompense for councils** related to their role in responding to the virus, and the financial impact they will face for supporting the local economy and maintaining services in constrained circumstances. The advice is for councils to monitor virus related expenditure and lost income, so that they are prepared for any allocation discussions in the future. The DBC Finance team is doing this.
- The potential implications for **future Government funding for Dacorum** cannot yet be forecast for the reasons detailed in the points above. However, what we do know is that the funding for 2020/21 will be unaffected because it is based on assessment of need at the time of last December's Settlement, and business rates performance (the strength of the local economy) in 2019/20.
- Government has previously stated that **future years' funding of local authorities** will be linked to growth or contraction of business rates within the local economy, which, depending on the longer-term economic implications of the current measures, could lead to funding implications for councils for many years to come. However, Government's financial model that will determine the precise method of business rates redistribution and incentivisation in future years has not yet been released – it is due as part of the Fair Funding Review outcome in November 2020 – therefore it is not yet possible to forecast the future funding implications for Dacorum. DBC will continue to work with Government and sector partners to understand and, where possible, influence what is likely to be an across-the-board revisiting of future funding principles.
- The Council has a large number of **commercial tenants** across the borough, primarily concentrated in the neighbourhood shopping centres around Hemel Hempstead. A statement of support for commercial tenants has been placed on the Council's website ([http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/business/statement-regarding-commercial-rent.pdf?sfvrsn=6b2d0f9e\\_18](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/business/statement-regarding-commercial-rent.pdf?sfvrsn=6b2d0f9e_18)) encouraging businesses who are experiencing issues with rent payment to contact the Council to

understand how we may be able to support them, e.g. through payment plans etc. It also states that although the Council will continue to invoice for rent (for contractual reasons), it will not chase overdue monies until this crisis is over. In order to further support local businesses, the Council will not be increasing any rents for those rent reviews that fall due throughout this period – it will instead hold them at current levels. This will have a financial impact on the Council's future income from commercial tenants (currently around £5m pa) because for those reviews that fall due over the next few months, there may be no further contractual opportunity to review for a number of years. Emerging trends will continue to be monitored and Members will receive regular updates throughout the year.

- **Cemeteries** are now closed to the public in accordance with Public Health England guidelines. County-wide discussions are underway to identify the forecast demand for cemetery services in future months, and how best to meet it, although the majority of demand is anticipated to fall on crematoria rather than cemeteries.

#### 4.2 Neighbourhood Delivery

- DBC **waste services** continue to operate as normal, with the exception of bulky waste collections which have been temporarily suspended (in common with 80% of districts within Herts, as at the time of writing). Four of the ten councils within Herts have suspended the collection of green waste, of which three have outsourced service providers. Continuation of service provision at Dacorum has been possible, despite the significant number of staff isolating as a result of being in vulnerable groups, due to the training of additional staff from employment agencies and Clean, Safe & Green. Working around constantly changing absences to protect services has only been possible through the exceptional commitment of staff within the Service.
- **Social distancing** has been a particular challenge for refuse collection across the whole of the sector. DBC was the first council in Hertfordshire to roll out a solution whereby one loader drives separately to the start of the round and, where possible then follows separately behind the truck, so that there are no more than 2 in a truck whenever possible. This is in addition to the implementation of a range of hygiene-related measures, some of which are outlined in the section on Clean Safe and Green. The service continues to work closely with the Trade Unions who have been fully supportive of the measures the Council has put in place to protect its employees.
- If resources become scarcer, they will be allocated to **prioritise services** in the following order: 1) refuse & recycling, 2) clinical, 3) commercial, 4) garden waste.



- **Clean Safe & Green (CSG)** continues to operate largely as normal in accordance with Government guidance that anyone who cannot work from home can still go to work, unless the business has been asked to close. Staff are able to maintain a distance of 2 meters throughout the working day, and numerous additional steps have been put in place to minimise risk of transmission (also applicable to Waste Services staff), including, but not limited to: all vulnerable staff sent home, daily disinfecting of cabs, keys and tools, no more than 2 to travel per cab, all staff issued with sanitiser, enhanced cleaning rota in place, information notices put up around the Depot, increased number of shared areas to reduce congestion at peak times, and regular briefings from Group Manager and Director.
- It is essential that CSG staff continue to arrive at the Depot around the same time as the refuse rounds in the morning in order to provide the first line of back-up staff in the event that there are insufficient Waste Services staff to provide the refuse service. Staff have not yet been required for rounds, but have helped out with waste-related services, e.g. shovel driving etc.
- The CSG staff are a skilled and present resource in the event that we need **redeployment** for cemeteries etc. or if there is a significant call on council staff to assist with the volunteer effort around food distribution for the vulnerable.
- **Environmental & Community Protection (ECP)** have implemented recent legislation to manage businesses that are operating in breach of social distancing regulations, with certain exemptions being mainly food shops, pharmacies and takeaways. Officers across Environmental Health and Planning Enforcement have been authorised to issue prohibition notices if necessary. The management of this legislation is the current focus of the team. Other EH services have been suspended or reduced to emergency response only in order to avoid unnecessary face-to-face contact.
- ECP has also been working with colleagues across the county to establish the **PPE requirement** for those officers deemed to require it by the Public Health England guidance. There is a national shortage of PPE and the management of appropriate allocation and keeping abreast of changes in guidance is a significant workload for the team.

## 5 Housing and Regeneration

The services in Housing and Regeneration are very varied and in some cases quite complex. Housing in particular is serving a wide number of very vulnerable individuals and consequently the actions taken as a result of the emergency are comprehensive.

## **5.1 Housing – what we have done so far:**

### **Development (New Build)**

- All staff working remotely
- All live construction projects closed down
- Focus is on preparation on the pipeline programme of new schemes in order that we can move quickly to increase supply and help stimulate the economy.

### **Strategic Housing**

- Large increase in homelessness due to Covid -19 isolation, parental evictions and Domestic Abuse, people no longer able to stay with family or friends during 'lock down', housing street homeless, and others not able to remain in current housing for various financial/social reasons.
- We have 156 households in Temporary Accommodation at 1 April including some in B&B.
- All street homeless were off the streets, but some have subsequently left the accommodation provided.
- Most service delivery is capable of being delivered remotely through phone/tablet/laptop though we have two Duty homeless staff (daily rota) at the Forum should any complex presentations arise that require direct contact (within strict safety guidelines)
- The Elms continues to operate at capacity
- Discretionary payments being made to families in accordance with government guidelines.

### **Tenants and Leaseholders**

- Most service delivery delivered remotely
- Focus on sheltered schemes: increased cleaning of common areas; daily call-ups by phone; closure of common rooms/lounges to avoid breaches of social distancing; and particular focus on very vulnerable.
- Working with Age UK on befriending and reducing loneliness.
- All usual health and safety checks continue at sheltered schemes.
- Clear messages to tenants having difficulty with rent payments due to lay-offs etc. that although we will require rent to be paid there will be no formal possession action for arrears at this point and to seek advice and assistance from us.
- Tenancy sustainment team workloads increasing due to existing issues combined with the current pressures of the emergency

## Property and Place

- Emergency repairs only
- Gas servicing continues (99.4%) compliance but some difficulties due to those self-isolating as well as the few tenants who fail to give us access. Enforcement will continue on the latter.
- Clear communication to all tenants and **leaseholders** regarding clear landings and encouragement to alert us if there are problems.

### 5.2 Housing - what we are planning for:

- Considering releasing a partial retention payment to Contractors with schemes in retention.
- Awaiting advice on potentially redeploying Housing Development staff to other critical services but starting to plan for a reorganisation of project responsibilities if this is required.
- We will continue to monitor government guidance and adjust our response as directed by guidance and the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team.
- We will continue to update the website and social media as more information is received about government changes to Welfare Benefits. With information and updates regularly changing the intention is to signpost tenants to specialist agencies and other support providers where they will be keeping details up to date. Additionally any guidance notes received from providers like Housing Quality Network (HQN), Chartered Institute Housing (CIS), Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), Housing Systems and legal briefings will be circulated and summarised for staff to ensure officers are kept up to date on current positions.
- We will start to reduce calls in Supported Housing where tenants have family support and request us to reduce levels of contact. This will allow us to manage resources and refocus on those with higher needs.
- With an increased numbers in B&B we will be reviewing how we can provide cooking facilities and ensure we manage a slightly different support needs to this group through the Sustainment Team.
- Once we are confident our critical services can be maintained we will start to review the impact of social isolation on tenants. Through partnering with the community and voluntary sector and redeployed staff we will identify how we can engage with tenants particularly those in Sheltered Housing without use of the communal lounges. Additionally there is an acknowledgment of the impact on mental health this situation will have – in particular with our more vulnerable tenants who are living alone and again finding different ways to encourage peer support and access some of the resources available online to help tenants.

- Preparing to re-deliver a revised empty homes process, concentrating on General Needs properties, to be able to further support and alleviate the issues with Temporary Accommodation and homeless.
- Working with Procurement on approaches from Contractors regarding ongoing payments under PPN02-20.

#### **5.4 Planning, Development and Regeneration – what we have done so far:**

- The main priorities are to make sure that action is taken to help protect the economy in the current emergency together with continuation of work on the Local Plan and Hemel Garden Communities.

#### **Development Management**

- The service is fully digitised so staff working remotely. A small number of staff do attend the Forum to carry out printing of letters and site notices
- Arrangements for Development Management Committee are dealt with in the separate Constitution report
- Site visits have been suspended and applicants being asked to send in photos, 'video site visits' and to post site notices.
- Caseload initially unchanged but now dropping with trends being monitored

#### **Enforcement**

- Work continues remotely (although there was attendance at ensuring compliance at Bovingdon Market)
- Maintaining cover for serious breaches of planning control as per the Local Enforcement Plan

#### **Land Charges**

- Work continues remotely though demand falling
- Personal search workload to end of April

#### **Building Control**

- Now carried out on our behalf by Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd.
- Issues like dangerous structures also covered
- The approach to business at this time is fully on line with social distancing arrangements for site inspections.

#### **Developer Contributions**

- Work able to be carried out remotely.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) continues to be collected. The regulations on CIL are very inflexible.
- We are anticipating that some developers seek variations of the s106 requirements and will be working with Legal on any Deeds of Variation which may follow.

### **Business Support**

- The team, working remotely, providing advice and signposting to businesses making contact.
- Information on website and regular communications with companies on our database to provide up to date information
- Working in conjunction with Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors and Chambers of Commerce.

### **Local Plan and Hemel Garden Communities**

- Work continues on both of these critical areas. Report to Cabinet 21 April on the Local Development Scheme.
- Key studies progressing.

## **5.4 Planning, Development and Regeneration - what we are planning for:**

### **Strategic Planning and Development**

- There are likely to be enquiries coming in from developers about how to progress their development proposals as a result of the pandemic, and whether flexibilities can be offered. This is referred to below in relation to developer contributions. The service will shortly be putting in place rapid response arrangements which will be provided free of charge for general, and albeit limited advice.
- Other options being explored at the current time are whether to reduce fees for pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)
- The service is also investigating whether the use of Local Development Orders (LDOs) for certain geographical locations or development types would help promote investment and development as part of recovery measures.

## **6. Chief Executives Department**

### **What we have done so far:**

#### **6.1 Performance, People and Innovation**

- All officers and members were already equipped with the essentials to work remotely. ICT have increased technical resources assigned to remote working technology. A peak, to this point, of 485 computer users have been working remotely without issues around capacity. In addition to this the ICT team have accelerated the roll-out of Microsoft Teams for virtual meetings and deployed software phones to those users where provision of teleworker devices has been impossible.
- Customer Services Unit are all working from home to answer phone calls, response to emails and social media. Face to face appointments have been suspended at the Forum, Berkhamsted and Tring. Call waiting time are around the council's target, but we are experience significantly more contact via emails.

- Support services in the People group are all fully functioning with staff working from home.
- The communications team has set up a Covid-19 page in the website so that customers can see any service information and disruption. Advice and Guidance to customers has also been uploaded onto this page. Social media updates are also been posted to reflect any changes/updates on services. Staff / managers updates are regularly posted to ensure consistent messages and assist with business continuity, a specific email account for staff queries has recently been set up.
- Adventure Playgrounds have been temporarily closed to comply with social distancing and “lock-down” restrictions.
- HR has re-deployed some staff to support critical services, for example Adventure Playground staff to Housing.
- The Community Safety Lead Officer is DBC’s representative on the operation shield/sustain project. Information has been widely publicised on the Herts help volunteering scheme. Meetings are taking place with the Council’s voluntary sector partners to understand key issues and how the Council can support. Regular dialogue has been undertaken with the Food Bank to understand their needs.
- A delivery of food parcels was received by the Council on Tuesday and staff have worked with local voluntary and charitable sector partners and our Housing staff to identify the needs of the particularly vulnerable and have distributed the first batch of food parcels to:
  - the Hospice of St Francis who were unable to secure sufficient food supplies from suppliers for their in-patient need and also identified those exceptionally vulnerable patients within the community in need of food parcels.
  - Age UK who are operating “Open Door” in Berkhamsted cooking hot meals for vulnerable residents within the community. Age UK will also be visiting vulnerable residents across the Borough and distributing some of the food parcels over the Easter weekend.
  - Tenancy sustainment and Homelessness staff have also identified priority vulnerable tenants within our Council homes and Temporary Accommodation who have a priority need for food parcels in advance of receiving benefits.
- The Old Town Hall has suspended all shows and is now closed to the public. The team have been refunding customers.

## **6.2 What we are planning for:**

- Plans are being developed for computer users to be able to drop off faulty and collect functioning equipment without needing to deal in person with a member of the ICT team. Roll-out of Microsoft Teams is currently being extended to all Members and ICT are investigating the addition of a dial-in facility.
- To support operation shield and sustain, once the role of district councils in this project is clearer.

## **6.3 Corporate and Contracted Services – What we have done so far:**

- All the Legal, Licensing, Corporate Support and Procurement staff are working remotely except the print and post room team who are part remote and part in the office as they require the use of the corporate printers and scanners.
- The CCTV service continues to operate predominantly from the control centre at Cupid Green with some remote access for those self-isolating.
- Facilities management delivered via Interserve continue to manage the Forum building on reduced opening hours of 8am-5pm Monday-Friday for Council staff, councillors and for essential use by Forum tenants only.
- The Procurement and Legal teams are working with internal teams and directly with key Council contractors in relation to contracts they manage such as Everyone Active (Leisure), Saba (Parking enforcement) and Interserve (Facilities Management) to assess the impact of business closures and restrictions on movement in accordance with Procurement Policy Note 02/20 – Supplier Relief due to Covid-19.
- A Covid-19 support package has been agreed with Everyone Active and other claims are currently being assessed.
- Officers are working with Huber (Berkhamsted Multi-Storey Car Pak) to assess delays to the opening of the car park because UKPN (electricity provider) and Hertfordshire Highways contractor Ringway have instructed all their staff to cease project work until further notice. This has meant that work scheduled for April which is required to facilitate the completion of the project (power connections and mini-roundabout on Lower Kings Road) will have to be rescheduled as soon as they have clearance to commence work.
- Feasibility work for the Berkhamsted Leisure Centre project continues. The outcomes from the stakeholder consultation are being reviewed and options developed and costed for further consideration.

- Committee meetings have been cancelled to date in order to protect officers and councillors and proposals have been developed to ensure that Council decision making can continue and remote meetings take place where possible – see separate Constitution report for further detail.

#### **6.4 What we are planning for:**

- The Corporate and Contracted Service staff will continue to work with key Council contractors to ensure business continuity wherever possible and assess claims to support contractors where appropriate.
- The Corporate Support Team will continue to support the democratic decision making process and assist with remote meeting planning where appropriate.

### **7. Interim Decision Making Processes**

Proposals to ensure that the democratic decision making process continues during the pandemic are set out in the separate Constitution report on this agenda.

### **8. Recommendations**

That Council note the contents of this report.