

<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Covid-19 Response
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Chief Executive

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

The report outlines a change in the Council's executive priorities during the period of contingency planning necessary to meet the demands of the covid-19 outbreak and provides for necessary changes to ensure that effective decision-making arrangements are in place to meet the scale of the challenge.

The report also outlines the actions the Council has undertaken to date in dealing with contingency planning on the scale required to meet its requirements and support the Government, NHS and communities during this period. It notes that the Council has been well placed to respond to these demands, given its success in relation to the hosting at Arrowe Park at the behest of the Government, but recognises that the size and level of demands upon the Council over the coming weeks and months are unprecedented.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Leader of the Council determines that:

- (a) The executive (Leader and Cabinet) priorities of the Council are amended to simply be:
  - (i) preservation of life;
  - (ii) supporting the vulnerable;
  - (iii) safeguarding children; and
  - (iv) aiding the Borough's businesses and economyduring this period that contingency planning is required to respond to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 epidemic.
- (b) Without prejudice to the current Executive Scheme of Delegation, which is noted and endorsed,:
  - (i) the Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any action in furtherance of the priorities set out at (a) above, acting in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet member and/or Group Leaders wherever it is reasonable and practicable in the opinion of the Head of Paid Service to do so; and
  - (ii) the Head of Paid Service and each Director is authorised to take any action that that officer considers is reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety or welfare of individuals.
- (c) That the Council's action to date in response to the covid-19 outbreak are noted and supported.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Council is acting of its own volition and in support of the Government and NHS in responding to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 epidemic. A severe pandemic could infect up to 80% of the population leading to a reduced workforce, increased pressure on health and social support and various important Council and community services.
- 1.2 In these circumstances it is considered important to clarify the Council's priorities in undertaking its contingency planning and to enable the Authority to deal with decision making in a lawful and speedy manner in the coming months.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The Council could continue as previously but it is recognised that this would not effectively recognise the situation or properly equip the Council to meet it.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 As part of its contingency planning, the Council has been considering what measures are to be needed during a severe covid-19 outbreak to reduce the pressure of key services and limit the spread of infection.
- 3.2 The Council has also been responding to Government, NHS and community requests for assistance and support.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The current and planned spend in response to this situation is being supported by Government but will also place additional demands upon the Council.
- 4.2 Such spend is likely to be contrary to the Council's agreed Budget and, as such, consent has been sought to accommodate this under the Council's rules for Urgent Decisions Outside the Budget or Policy Framework. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees, and in the round the Mayor, have agreed and comments received include:
  - In these unprecedented circumstances I agree that this is a matter of urgency and the correct way to proceed.
  - I'd like to thank every one of the officers who is working so hard for the people of Wirral and send best wishes for your continued good health
  - I fully support this type of action.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Government is currently taking through Parliament the Coronavirus Bill. The Bill contains temporary measures designed to either amend existing legislative provisions or introduce new statutory powers which are designed to mitigate these impacts and several parts of the Bill directly change the legislative provisions under which local authorities operate.

5.2 The Bill aims to support Government and the Council by creating and amending legislative provisions for:

- Increasing the available health and social care workforce
- Easing the burden on frontline staff
- Containing and slowing the virus
- Managing the deceased with respect and dignity
- Supporting people

5.3 The Bill is required as part of a concerted effort across the whole of the UK to tackle the covid-19 outbreak. The intention is that it will enable the right people from public bodies across the UK to take appropriate actions at the right times to manage the effects of the outbreak. As emergency legislation it is fast tracked and contains a time limited end.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 Significant demands will be placed on Council staff and resources in responding to this emergency situation and supporting the Government and NHS to manage the effects of a covid-19 epidemic.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 There is a risk that the health, safety or welfare of individuals and the viability of businesses will be placed at risk if delegated authority is not given to the Chief Executive and Directors to take action in furtherance of the executive priorities detailed in the recommendations during this period that contingency planning is required to respond to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 epidemic.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Group Leaders are regularly discussing the Council's decisions and responses to contingency planning for the covid-19 outbreak.

8.2 The Council is discussing with community groups, and Members who may assist, as to how support may be given and volunteers co-ordinated during this time.

8.3 The Council is discussing its response, directly with Government as well as with the NHS and the Local Resilience Forum for Merseyside (LRF), as to how it can act in co-ordination with other governmental and non-governmental bodies.

8.4 It is to be noted that decisions by an officer in this situation will be implemented immediately and not subject to call-in as an urgent decision. That is, under Standing Order 35(10), "A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the Call-In process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interest" and that "The Chief Executive must agree [with the decision maker] both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency".

8.5 Business as usual decisions, those taken by the Leader in lieu of a meeting of Cabinet for example, will not be subject to removal of call-in.

## 9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. There will be several direct and indirect equality impact implications associated with the decisions arising from this report which will be considered at each relevant stage.

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly out of this report

**REPORT AUTHOR:**    **Paul Satoor**                      **Philip McCourt**  
   **Chief Executive**                      **Director of Governance & Assurance**

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Council Constitution  
Government Guidance

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date