

APPENDIX B – Info on Applied Resilience / LRF etc

Pre- Major Incident Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Work

Applied Resilience (AR) is the Council's contractor for emergency planning and business continuity. Working alongside management team and staff across all of the Council's departments, AR provide specialist advice on how to plan for, respond to and manage internal or external emergencies the Council might face in order to increase resilience and allow the Council to continue supporting the residents of Spelthorne by delivering essential services.

Before the declaration of the pandemic, AR was busy working with the Council to ensure that the emergency plans in place were up to date and, in a position to support the council through the unpredictable events of the coming months. AR reviewed the Council's business continuity plans to validate the rating of the Council's critical functions so that, for example, in the event that Knowle Green or the Depot had to close or there was a significant reduction in staffing levels, decisions could quickly be made about how to scale down services to free up resources for the most critical ones to continue. AR reviewed and distributed the Pandemic Flu Plan to make sure that the health emergency specific actions were taken into consideration and that staff were aware of their likely role in a pandemic response.

To support the Council as robustly as possible, AR designated a COVID-19 lead within the team to track the latest national and international guidance on the impacts and risks associated with the virus. The COVID-19 lead kept the Council's management team and key staff informed with daily updates and advice on changes to working practices and workplace safety. A working group was formed to track the Council's preparedness at a local level and encourage senior managers to meet frequently to discuss challenges and solutions. These meetings gave managers the opportunity to discuss key issues such as what communications should go out to staff about their safety in the office and Personal Protective Equipment requirements, how would staff absences be managed and how would residents be supported in the face of COVID-19.

AR's groundwork gave the Council a solid foundation to build upon when the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF) declared a Major Incident to stand up a regional response mechanism. On an ongoing basis, AR represent the Council within the SLRF, working alongside multi-agency partners including emergency services, public health, social care and the voluntary sector to plan for how we would collectively respond to emergencies. The remainder of this section covers AR's involvement, alongside Council representatives, in the SLRF's response structure.

Key functions and cells of the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF)

The SLRF operates under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to co-ordinate a Surrey wide response to major incidents including Pandemic Flu. This note highlights the key roles and interactions Spelthorne Borough Council staff and our emergency responders Applied Resilience have had during COVID-19.

Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)

On the 19 March 2020, Surrey County Council and the Surrey Fire & Rescue Service declared a Major incident for COVID-19. This meant all partners in Surrey stood up to respond collaboratively to this incident. Throughout the incident, strategic representatives from within MAT/CTG Group Head have dialled into the Strategic Coordinating Group meetings daily

ensuring the Council is represented and understands the strategic direction of the incident. AR has continually supported the strategic lead with specialist advice and support.

Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)

The Tactical Coordinating Group sits underneath the Strategic Coordinating Group in the SLRF command structure and has been overseeing 10 tactical level cells. AR have been representing the Council on this group, escalating internal issues where appropriate, calling into calls twice a day and physically representing the Council at the Strategic and Tactical Command Centre at Mt Browne, Surrey Police Headquarters, while following social distancing rules. They have ensured the Council is a key player in this response and fully represented in the cells described below.

LRF PPE Cell

The shortage of PPE has been a huge headline nationally and something which seems quite small has a massive impact on safety and staff morale. Early on the SLRF agreed to work with partners to support procuring PPE however it has been a huge undertaking. To date, the cell has distributed over 3.2 million pieces of equipment and supported 920 organisations.

In the early days, AR were instrumental in ensuring the Council received a portion of the PPE supply. A prioritisation matrix had to be written ensuring the Council's needs were met and understood by other organisations. For example, refuse crews guidance sat outside of the public health guidance and AR successfully got them prioritised one of the highest for PPE like hand sanitiser.

In addition, like a lot of things in this pandemic, the guidance has been continually changing and updated as central government and public health authorities learn more about the virus, so AR have been ensuring we are up to date with all the relevant guidance.

LRF Excess Deaths Cell

Sadly, this incident has seen many deaths meaning increased capacity is needed to ensure families are supported and able to respectfully lay their loved ones to rest. With support from AR, the Group Head for Neighbourhood Services (GHNS) and the Cemeteries team have been involved in this process, ensuring they can respond to any increases. The GHNS has also taken the area hub lead role for the Northern Boroughs in the SLRF process.

LRF Key Workers Cell

COVID-19 represented an enormous challenge for managing the workforce. Identifying and justifying council key workers was essential to ensure access to education settings for key staff to ensure they can continue to work. This work was also important for supporting planning work for testing for key workers. AR represented the council in ensuring Council issues were appropriately reflected and the work was supported for residents. This was particularly important for supporting the council's welfare response and ensuring the council's critical services were successfully maintained.

LRF Testing Cell

Effective testing is an essential part of the national response to the pandemic. The Surrey Testing cell was led by the NHS in Surrey, supported by other partners including AR as

representatives. This ensured Council staff gained access to testing early on for key roles and the Council understood the process and internal work required.

LRF Welfare Cell

The welfare cell oversees the support provided for the most vulnerable residents in Surrey, bringing together multi-agency partners from the SLRF to discuss and review progress, common challenges and provide guidance where available. A key component of the welfare group's work has focused on those considered to be the most clinically vulnerable who are required to shield in their homes for a 12-week period. Access to food, medication and emotional support for this community was central to this and in the early weeks of the response, AR represented the Council within these SLRF discussions, providing updates on local activity around the community response hub and the welfare calls/visits the Council was making not only to the shielded, but also the vulnerable people known to the Council via internal records. AR provided frequent updates from the welfare cell to the Council from national guidance, support mechanisms available through the SLRF through to process requirements for reporting through to central government. As the response mechanisms were put in place and the Community Wellbeing leads joined the welfare cell calls, AR resumed a tactical advisory role within the welfare cell in line with their advisory presence on the other cells.

Infrastructure Cell

The infrastructure cell monitored a range of multi-agency concerns, including waste, telecommunications and other utilities. One key focus was to help coordinate an approach across Surrey to provide temporary accommodation for the homeless, and in particular rough sleepers. The issue was that the supply of accommodation was particularly low after the government ordered all hotels to close whilst asking local authorities to find accommodation for rough sleepers. The cell provided a daily forum for housing teams across the county to discuss their issues with each other and coordinate demand for rooms to lobby hotels to open as the majority of hotels would only open if a certain number of rooms were block booked. AR facilitated this coordination alongside highlighting and collecting data on the rough sleeper funding gap which has resulted in additional funding being received from SCC. AR continues to coordinate the data requests received from a range of partners on temporary accommodation.

SBC Council Support

AR has been in place, representing the Council on each of the cells, alongside representatives from within the Council. Taking part in the V-BEC calls has been instrumental in keeping AR up to date on the wide range of issues the Council is facing and allowed staff to have answers to key questions within the tactical forum. Keeping in touch with Group Heads, the tactical and strategic leads throughout the response and into the new normal is a key part of AR's COVID-19 work.

Emergency Planning BAU

Normal life, although greatly altered, has not stopped and AR have to ensure the Council is ready to respond to another emergency during the COVID-19 response. They have continued to be the out of hours contact for any emergency and have developed guidance papers on

additional measures staff will need to take, for example, guidance on evacuating residents and opening a rest centre while in lockdown. AR worked with the Police, Fire, County Council and other district and borough councils to update the procedure on how we would need to adapt to protect staff and residents. They have worked closely with the independent living team to ensure the Council is ready, should the need arise.

Recovery

Authorities are still in the response stage; however as we see the recovery work increasing AR is supporting the Council to adapt structures and prepare for the long recovery work ahead, ensure the Council returns to a new and better normal. An important part of this work moving forward will be to allow staff to provide comments on their experiences and to complete a debrief. This information will provide essential learning to both the Council and the SLRF to ensure that should we ever find ourselves in a similar pandemic in the future, we have learned from this experience and harnessed the strength of the incredible work the Council has achieved in such a short timeframe. SBC is now progressing the recovery process.

