

Appendix G

Example of Councillor Briefing Document

Dear Councillors

Please find enclosed today's briefing (6 April 2020).

Key updates include:

1. Pandemic Forecasting
2. Community Hub
3. Foodbanks / Voluntary Services
4. Staff
5. Financial Implications
6. Council Diary
7. Adult Social Care / SPAN
8. Meals on Wheels / SPAN Alarms / Housing Benefits
9. Business / Compliance
10. Collection / Business Rates
11. Neighbourhood Services
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17. Future: Post COVID19 – Returning to Normal?
18. Future: Post COVID19 - Elections

1. Pandemic Forecasting

- Covid-19 modelling has highlighted extreme challenges for the next ten days in terms of health impact - capacity for all agencies will be severely stretched.
- Peak is forecasted to be reached on 13th April 2020.

2. Community Hub - Support4Spelthorne

The *Support4Spelthorne (S4S) Hub* - open 7 days a week and staffed from 8am to 8pm. An answerphone service will be available for out of hours.

Food parcels already delivered to shielded residents in the Borough. Parcels include food, toiletries, information and advice.

The dedicated *Support4Spelthorne* phone line and email address is now up and running.

Key community message for those vulnerable and in need of assistance: We are here to help you. Call **01784 446446** or email Covid19welfare@spelthorne.gov.uk

This works as a triage system. Our staff use a script to identify the need of the resident and who should help them.

The service has been communicated widely via press release, social media, leaflet drops, posters in the foodbanks, our website and community noticeboards.

Circa 1,400 Calls /emails have been made / sent to Category A residents.

Food is only one element of current service with some very dramatic / emotive calls being taken by staff.

An increasing number of residents received food parcels over the weekend from S4S.

A short menu suggestion now going out in packs to help resident pull together weekly meals for themselves. Included is Information advice of allergen warnings.

Extra items added to the food packs such as butter, banana's, personal care items (sanitary, incontinence pads, toothbrushes, hand soap etc).

British Airways have offered to supply toothbrushes/toothpaste sets, socks and blankets. These will be with us within the next few days.

Good news stories are now emerging; one of our social prescribers received a call from a Category A residents who had been in self-isolation for 2 weeks with no support.

An online referral issued to VSNS, within 1-hour resident received a visit by a member of London Irish. A cooked meal provided and offers of help with rubbish, shopping, electric key, Tesco Shopping and prescription.

The difference it made to our resident was unbelievable from sounding so low this morning to actually laughing this afternoon!

Information about the S4S service well received by local GPs who are very grateful to us for our work in the community.

It was noted that supplies for the shielded Category A group should be coming from the Spectrum in Guildford. It has become apparent that we are offering a better service and intend to bypass them, as we are aware they only have 140 packs ready for the entire county.

We are running a Borough-wide safety net to support those people in the community most in need.

We will be using Foodbanks, *Support4Spelthorne* Community Hub and Voluntary Services North Surrey (VSNS).

We have over 150 parcels ready to deliver to our residents - these are being prepared on a daily basis.

We are continuing to source palletised food for parcels where we can to keep the costs down.

Staff redeployed from all areas of the Council to assist with this huge task.

There are three categories to consider:

Category A - circa 1,200 in Spelthorne

County level: one central hub Guildford - There may be requirement for SBC to help.

Category B & C - circa 30,000

Borough level – SBC responsible for getting in touch to establish needs.

SBC *Support4Spelthorne* Hub run primarily by redeploying staff.

The location of our hub will not be made public.

We are working with the Army to ensure storage, rotation and demand correctly handled.

The Army called in to provide support and to deliver protective clothing to all our main A&E hospitals.

RAMC has been called in to provide Ambulance Drivers, Doctors and Nurses - Some already working in those roles, as they are Reservists.

3. Foodbanks / Voluntary Services

Facilitation of major food donations have already taken place – exceeding 30,000 meals.

VSNS are working with London Irish who are available to help and willing to cover the whole borough with hot meals, delivery of shopping and medication collection.

Workforce Volunteering DBS checks continuing with SBC issuing ID letters incorporating photos.

Foodbanks are primarily engaging with families impacted by furlough, jobs losses, zero hour's contracts or people who are known to us before Covid-19.

Foodbanks continue to deliver meals:

- St. Saviours 8,500 boxes per week
- Stanwell Foodbank 10,000 boxes per week

Manna Foodbank is also working hard to assist residents.

Voluntary Services North Surrey (VSNS) are working closely with other voluntary sectors & now have 700-800 volunteers. They are assigning the volunteers to community groups covering the borough.

Some of the things they are helping residents with is dog walking and shopping.

A2D are providing residents with financial advice.

Spelthorne have helped the foodbanks with the provision of electricians, freezers and storage facilities.

Brokered a major corporate and ongoing donation of supplies to foodbanks from BP.

London Irish offered help to prepare and deliver meals. This offer is not yet required so they changed their offering to help assist with any shopping required by foodbanks.

McDonalds and other suppliers have donated excess food to the foodbanks.

The police have put the Fordbridge, Greeno and Foodbanks on their vulnerable list to enable resources to be sent immediately should any problems occur.

4. Staff

Increased number of non-frontline staff contracting / displaying COVID19 symptoms.

Updated PPE Government guidelines received but it is still not clear for local authority staff requiring a variety of PPE, particularly those delivering meals on wheels.

We need to look at guidelines and decide how we can do things differently whilst there is a lack of PPE for our staff.

One suggestion was to deliver the meals on trays rather than plating up in the home. Decisions today as to how we will work around this issue.

Staff safety must be at the forefront of what we are doing.

Gloves, hand sanitiser gel and wipes continue to be available to all staff.

Following discussions around data capture of our most vulnerable people, it emerged that an ICT expert was needed – [REDACTED] will be redeployed to help with this task.

The ICT team will help support [REDACTED] whilst he delivers this project.

New PPE guidance due out on use – await evaluation in context of service delivery – including Meals on Wheels service.

Staff redeployed to the *Support4Spelthorne* Community Hub and telephone lines.

22 staff now trained to answer telephone line and email address for Welfare Calls .

Ten staff redeployed to work with Customer Services.

Need to be mindful of staff with underlying health conditions. Latest PHE guidelines do not include the need for facemasks.

Staff meetings taking place virtually on a weekly basis.

Local government workers deemed crucial to delivering essential public services.

All staff apart from 'key workers' are now working from home.

Our staff complement is depleting with increased self-isolation and some displaying C19 symptoms.

We are maintaining provisions of wipes, gloves, sanitising gel to staff in order to keep them safe.

Our cleaning regime has changed we are now using alcohol medical wipes to clean all surfaces in common use.

5. Financial Implications

Conference call with SCC today to discuss financial arrangements around the County's offer to underwrite some of the costs incurred due to Covid-19.

Fundamental cost implication for borough, likely to be significant and at this point, uncertain what can be claimed back from Central Government.

It is anticipated that the financial impact to Spelthorne Borough Council over 3 months will likely be in the region of circa £5 million.

There will be financial ramifications across the country and Local Governments will have to lobby Central Government in the coming months to help with reimbursement of the financial impacts.

Accountants liaising on regular basis with service areas on income affected and assessing likely costs.

Following discussions between Leader and CEX, agreed to put aside £500k funding for this crisis to ensure we do the best we possibly can for our residents. A great deal more resources will need to be allocated in due course.

6. Council Diary

The regulations have been published and came into effect on Saturday 4 April.

Operating a Virtual Borough Emergency Centre (V-BEC) with daily virtual meetings.

Two Extra-ordinary cabinet meetings on 8 April. - Gill Scott has been assisting some members with the technology in preparation for the virtual meeting.

This means that all the members can vote even though they are dialling in remotely. [REDACTED] is preparing an updated script.

We are then moving on to consider what the regulations mean for future meetings.

Councillors reminded to test their equipment before 11am.

Licensing sub Committees will take place virtually.

April's Full Council postponed and will take place in May, virtually.

The Annual Council Meeting postponed, procedures being explored to purely facilitate Mayoral handover.

7. Homeless / Adult Social Care / SPAN

Raising with MCHLG the housing provision question relating to the 4,000 prisoners to be released early - in view of expected HMP Bronzefield releases, are we expected to provide housing locally?

Ten units have been secured with the Thames Lodge Hotel for immediate use for those people who have presented as homeless and hospital discharges.

Government have requested we move rough sleepers into self-contained accommodation - we currently have nine rough sleepers in the Borough, of those four have been helped.

Not all rough sleepers will accept help. We currently have a block booking of four rooms ready if this situation changes.

Hospital discharges continue to rise - we are in daily contact with Ashford & St. Peters.

As of 1 April we are aware of 33 discharges across Surrey - most of whom require some assistance to either return home or require step down accommodation.

The Economic Development team are continuing to negotiate with local hotels to help secure beds.

Anticipated that we will need at least 54 units within the next 10 weeks.

We continue to work with neighbouring authorities to see if there is a common solution to the shortage of beds and will continue to do so, however each Borough & Districts have their own complex needs.

Seven Adult Social Care patients discharged and require step down accommodation (Sheltered / Extra Care Unit). A2D are helping with these patients, however the properties require furniture and SBC are procuring.

Data received is very complex – staff members in Strategic Planning redeployed to assist data analysis.

Travelodge closed in Spelthorne in the light of Government guidelines - Three clients relocated because of this closure including an 84 year old and a wheelchair user.

Looking at Surrey wide options, block booking of bed and breakfast places and discussing with neighbouring authorities.

We have worked through a list of 1,780 clients welfare calls to ensure our elderly residents have the ability to self-isolate and to provide assistance.

8. Meals on Wheels / SPAN Alarms / Housing Benefits

Updated PPE Government guidelines received - suggested that MoW staff, if plating up food should have aprons and masks in addition to other PPE, however it is not possible to source any aprons or masks and an LRF request has been made.

Meals on Wheels offering continues to increase serving over 1,000 meals per week.

We have deployed staff to assist with SPAN alarms, the *Support4Spelthorne* Hub and with deliveries to residents.

Pharmacies – we are trying to get protocol for fast tracking to collect medication for delivery to those in need. The authority needs to come from hospital/health departments.

Housing Benefit calls continue to increase as members of the public move to furlough or lose their income.

Meals on Wheels and SPAN alarms dropped to our clients via doorstep deliveries to ensure the safety of our clients and staff.

Daily Meals on Wheels deliveries maintained 7 days a week with the assistance of Spelride drivers.

9. Business / Compliance

Grant relief payments to small and medium businesses paid early this week. We hope this will help settle some business anxiety from the local businesses.

SBC at forefront of administering Government business support.

Government has issued guidance that there will be a 12-month exemption on business rates for specific industries, which include Retail, Leisure and A2 premises. We are currently in the process of re-billing.

Applying retail discount relief to bills this week.

Business Grants issue being reviewed - Guidance on smaller loans and SMEs awaited.

Online form published on website for Grant claims.

Funds transferred to councils by 1 April and payments to be made as soon as possible after that.

Engaging with Staines-upon-Thames BID and Spelthorne Business Forums to ensure they are made aware of new Government measures.

Signposting local businesses to the relevant websites.

Business closures prescribed by Government are now enforceable by law due to the threat to public health.

A business operating in contravention of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closures) Regulations 2020 will be committing an offence.

10. Collection / Business Rates

Over 360 emails were received requesting deferred payment but no reason given. The electronic hardship form will help us deal with these queries.

Large numbers of telephone calls continue to be received by our customer services teams.

Electronic hardship form now published on our website to reduce emails.

Ten staff redeployed to assist with this task.

Signposting residents via our website and social media to contact us if their circumstances have changed.

The link to the Council Tax page was sent to all Councillors by Communications Team.

A hardship scheme of £150.00 discount to Council Tax has been put in place by the Government to those households in need.

Customer Services, Council Tax and Housing Benefits are working together to process this as soon as possible.

We are required to pay out £14m in grants within the next week. Fraud and audit checks are in place.

Business support grants - Customer Services team are pulling together payment details from a number of sources. Cheque payments will be made to those we do not have bank details for.

It is too early to know how Direct Debits / Collections will be affected – Government guidelines awaited.

Court action suspended until 30 June for recovery of debts, therefore no recovery until August.

Collection Rates as at 22.3.2020: Council Tax 98.2% and NNDR 99.21%.

11. Neighbourhood Services

Waste services are running as normal.

Communicating with residents that only one bin per household will be collected. We will not collect any side waste.

We are also reconfirming our recycling message.

Neighbourhood Service is helping with the *Support4Spelthorne* hub by picking up food from suppliers and delivering back to the hub for onward transmission to our residents.

Guidance has been received from WISH the Waste Officer Forum that confirms that facemasks do not need to be worn by operatives - these are for clinical staff only (which SBC do not employ).

Fruit & veg and fish & meat market stalls continue to operate in Staines on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and will continue to do so as long as stock is available.

Leader has passed on thanks to the team for the waste collection service. Residents had said how pleased they were with the continuing service.

Surrey Police have indicated they may want to use Fordbridge Park as a gathering area for their meetings – we are facilitating in partnership.

Parking charges for NHS and social care staff and police waived.

Elmsleigh Centre and Tothill Car Park are closed.

All other Council car parks remain open and chargeable.

The Walled Garden is now closed.

All key workers provided with essential travel letters.

Uplift from members of the public wanting Garden Waste Bins – these are now being delivered.

Cemetery Services are running a normal service.

Grounds maintenance grass cutting continues.

Play areas, tennis courts, fitness trails, skate parks are now closed.

Parks remain open.

Posters are in all our parks, open spaces and cemeteries to advise social distancing rules.

Community Safety teams and Enforcement Officers continue to operate.

12. Communications

Daily virtual meetings taking place (including weekends) V-BEC to ensure clear communication and timely action.

All Councillors sent communication material ahead of going live.

On Friday 3 April, the Leader filmed another 'you tube' video for residents.

Clr Buttar was live on BBC radio this weekend; his key message was how we are supporting community

Social media items continue to be scheduled.

A Surrey-wide press release will be going out to ask for PPE equipment and how to donate this.

Councillors asked to focus on their role in the community to help reach out to members of the public with key messages. Please retweet and push forward communications to help us reach areas of the communities we may have missed.

The challenge has been for the Comms team to be as reactive as we can.

Ensuring all key messages are communicated.

Working with the key services on communications plans

Ensuring we are reaching those that are most vulnerable isolated or not digitally connected.

The poster shared last week is now at food banks.

Over 500 copies delivered to doors with the help of  waste collections teams.

Noticeboards across the Borough are updated with key information – contact details, support posters and from Surrey CC – How to best protect yourselves.

Press releases shared this week include:

- Community hub *Support4Spelthorne*.
- Mental Health Well-being
- Silent Solutions (domestic abuse)
- How to avoid coronavirus scams
- Waste and recycling update

Working with Surrey and other districts and boroughs on a 7-day rolling plan to ensure messages are consistent.

Updating web pages – in particular business pages with financial advice on grants, employment, rent and council tax assistance and mortgage advice.

E News special edition

Surrey County Council leaflet will be distributed to every household during w/c 6th April.

Social media updates

Advice on recycling bin and a reminder that no side waste collected.

Press release on domestic abuse – ‘Silent Solutions’ also updating our social media with this information.

Car park news for free parking for NHS/Care workers/Police well received by public

New web page on Covid-19 business rates information

Video of Leader – positive feedback received

Press releases on wellbeing

Campaigns on social media - including how to stay healthy with your family

Multi-information agency group set up - Jennifer Medcraft will be responsible for staff wellbeing.

Council tax article posted on website and updated FAQs.

New Covid-19 Grants page on website

New Coronavirus webpage for business section and job retention scheme has gone live.

Further promotion of Coronavirus helpline.

Concern about violent abuse cases being hidden, procedures in place.

Working on mental health and wellbeing article.

Volunteering poster put on noticeboards and Community Centres.

Councillors to advise how many volunteering posters they need.

Communications teams across Districts and Boroughs are working together to ensure clear messages are getting out particularly on:

- NHS Guidance
- Public Health Executive (PHE)
- Surrey Communications Careline
- Scammers

Communicating to residents advising of Covid-19 Webpage, Covid-19 e-news, Social Media and Elmsleigh Centre shops.

There will be a direct mail leaflet from Surrey County Council produced w/c 6 April listing 5 key initiatives.

Posters printed for the parks, open spaces and cemeteries.

Shared Surrey environmental partnerships waste and recycling information during the Coronavirus including how to dispose of waste if you are self-isolating.

Community Safety consultation to be extended for a further 2 weeks.

13. Building Control / Environmental Health

Environmental Health have carried out inspections of a number of businesses. Seven were non-compliant and we may have to look at issuing provision notices.

Visits to public houses taking place this week with Police following reports of lock-ins. Night time visits will also be made.

Increase in complaints about domestic noise.

Nearly all of the team are working from home, business as usual to deliver services.

Agreed Police joint working for closures and gathering control. .

Business premises Environmental Health Officers and Technical Officers will deal with enforcement where possible.

Insurance - 3-month insurance extension has been agreed.

14. Regeneration & Growth

Planning applications are continuing to come through – we have been working hard for the past 6-9 months and are in a good position to do everything remotely.

One enforcement officer is dealing with urgent items on a priority basis.

Strategic Planning are continuing work on the local plan.

Economic Development are working hard with our business communities to ensure they are aware of the business grants available.

Also working to help secure hotel providers and furniture for the step down housing.

Assets are working on our projects adhering to Government and PHE guidelines.

15. SBC Site Developments

Lifebuild have confirmed that they are returning to Site at White House Hostel so all SBC Sites are now operating.

All SBC sites are fully adhering to the Industry Guidance for Building Sites during COVID-19 (produced by the Construction Leadership Council).

16. Future: Return to Normal?

Will there be one single moment when the risk is fully eliminated and the crisis is over, without the possibility of further waves of CV19.

The scale and severity of CV19's impact generates a set of challenges in relation to health and wellbeing, communities, civic society, public services and economy.

We will explore, in due course if there are any positive approaches and changes developed through our corporate response that we want to retain in the longer-term.

17. Future: Elections

The government is also working to bring in new law so that by-elections, local polls and referendums cannot be held before 06 May 2021.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 has already postponed local and Police and Crime Commissioner elections scheduled in the UK for Thursday 07 May 2020 until 06 May 2021

Next Councillor Verbal Briefing – Wednesday, 8 April 2020.

DCM

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