

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 14 JUNE 2021

PART I - DELEGATED

9. SERVICE RESTORATION REPORT - JUNE 2021 (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a summary of the current position of Council services at the time of writing and the plans for restoring services that are currently not operating or only part operating due to Covid restrictions.
- 1.2 Heads of Service and Service Managers have provided updates relating to their service area detailed in this report.
- 1.3 At time of writing Step 4 of the Government Roadmap is still expected to come into effect on 21 June. Any changes to the Council's services restoration as a result of changes to the Government Roadmap will be set out in a verbal update at Committee.

2 Detail

- 2.1 Since the start of the pandemic several update reports detailing the Council's service position have been taken to the Covid-19 Response sub-committee, with the latest update taken to 25 January Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.2 Some services have been able to continue to operate business as usual (BAU) throughout the pandemic, some have had minor or significant impacts and some have had to cease altogether. Since the Government Roadmap was announced in February a number of services have been restored. This report focuses on those services (or aspects of services) that continue to be affected by Covid restrictions. Appendix 1 provides detail on the services currently impacted by Covid restrictions.
- 2.3 Three Rivers House remains closed and the majority of staff continue to work from home where possible in line with Government guidance. Where officers are working remotely but continuing to offer a full service, these services have been classed as operating as business as usual.
- 2.4 Three Rivers House will reopen to the public as soon as practicable following Step 4 of the Government Roadmap, moving eventually to the revised opening hours of Monday-Friday 9am-4pm.
- 2.5 There are a number of service aspects that have moved to online or remote services that are intending to continue this channel shift in the long term where it is able to provide a more effective or efficient service.
- 2.6 The long term corporate approach to agile working is being explored through a separate project under the New Ways of Working.

3 Services currently operating with significant restrictions:

3.1 *Fraud*

- 3.1.1 The Fraud service continues to be restricted by limitations on face to face meetings, and a number of the team continue to be redeployed to Revenue and Benefits to support the processing of Covid support grants. It is intended that face to face meetings (including Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) interviews or

'interviews under caution') will resume from Step 4 in the Government Roadmap, currently from 21 June.

3.2 Leisure Development

- 3.2.1 Leisure activities will be restarting gradually over the coming months. This includes Play Rangers, skate camps, Active Parks, Leavesden Country Park activities and Friends of sessions.
- 3.2.2 Some specific leisure development activities are not currently running, which are delivered within care homes e.g. Sheltered Housing Scheme and Play with Care, and some activities which are delivered in schools, e.g. Play Rangers. There are a few leisure activities that although they can commence from the 17 May, won't commence until September.
- 3.2.3 The team are currently exploring how we would deliver a physical activity programme or other leisure activities, that would be run face to face but giving people the option to join remotely if they cannot physically attend e.g. due to childcare.
- 3.2.4 Although not directly delivered by Leisure, adult parkrun will commence at the earliest from Step 4 in the Government Roadmap, currently 21 June, at Rickmansworth Aquadrome and South Oxhey Playing Fields.

3.3 Leisure Management Contract (SLM)

- 3.3.1 All Leisure centres have now re-opened and their programme will be delivered following the Government's Roadmap. The leisure website will continue to be updated to reflect this and include details for individual activities and how they are Covid secure.

3.4 Regulatory Services

- 3.4.1 The majority of the services are running business as usual and are operating effectively remotely with few exceptions. Services remain busy with significant work volumes specifically Development Management (DM) where planning application volumes are high (in excess of 250 more applications than the last financial year) and officers are prioritising recovery work following the pandemic in other areas (i.e. highways/business support).
- 3.4.2 External site visits and internal visits (going through properties) were reintroduced from 17 May.
- 3.4.3 Collection of taxi licensing plates and badges is still being facilitated at Watersmeet until 14 June. This is expected to move to Three Rivers House from Step 4 of the Government's Roadmap, currently 21 June.
- 3.4.4 Taxi driver knowledge tests for new driver applications have been reintroduced as of 17 May due to an increase in demand.
- 3.4.5 PACE interviews for licensing/enforcement are still not being conducted as there is no requirement at the moment to hold any, but this may change as we feel the impact of the night time economy reopening.
- 3.4.6 Development Management pre application meetings are currently being held virtually and will only be held face to face if requested and considered appropriate going forward.

- 3.4.7 It is intended that the Duty Planner service will continue virtually on a permanent basis.
- 3.4.8 Hertsmere Borough Council were holding face to face parking surgeries in TRH reception (by appointment) for those needing assistance with parking permits. This has not been happening but we intend to reintroduce this service again when the offices reopen.
- 3.4.9 Herts County Council have gone out to procurement to extend Covid marshals until December 2021, 4 of these would remain covering TRDC with a specific focus on businesses.
- 3.4.10 Following the change in Covid restrictions at Step 3 of the Government Roadmap, Parkguard marshals who were patrolling the Aquadrome and Leavesden Country Park at weekends ceased on 16 May. The situation and infection rates will be monitored and consideration given to reemployment if necessary.

3.5 *Watersmeet*

- 3.5.1 Watersmeet reopened on Tuesday 18 May with the first scheduled event on 29 May. The theatre is currently operating with Covid secure measures including a reduced auditorium capacity. It is expected that capacity limits will be relaxed from the next step in the Government Roadmap currently 21 June.
- 3.5.2 Watersmeet continues to be supported by the Culture Recovery Fund grant through to the end of June, with a full programme of live theatre and events in the second half of the year. Audience demand and any potential future Covid restrictions are the two biggest factors in Watersmeet recovery and financial position.
- 3.5.3 Going forward Watersmeet's face to face and telephone box office will be open Tuesdays-Fridays 10am-4pm, with online bookings available 24/7.

4 Services currently operating with some restrictions:

4.1 *Community Partnerships*

- 4.1.1 Community Partnerships are currently operating a number of new services as a result of the pandemic including tackling vaccine inequality and increasing uptake as well as increased support and projects with the voluntary sector both for response and recovery. The service is also experiencing increased anti-social behaviour cases as more services are now operational in the community, more is being reported and increased strategic work and partnership projects are being developed to tackle serious violence and exploitation as we are experiencing more incidences locally. Corporate support services, consultations and climate change services continue to be fully operational.
- 4.1.2 Healthy hubs are reopening in line with guidance and increased activities are expected as restrictions ease.
- 4.1.3 The Community Support Service, Domestic Abuse Service are all running face to face including home visits. The Independent Domestic Violence Adviser is currently based at home but is now visiting clients at hospital. Family Worker face to face and home visits are taking place. High risk Anti-social behaviour internal visits are taking place.

- 4.1.4 The 'No More' Project for serious violence is up and running, and visits will recommence in houses soon with full PPE and no more than one house visit per day.
- 4.1.5 Visits out in the community are being increased as well as door step visits, but we will only restart home visits once restrictions allow which is expected to be from Step 4 of the Government's Roadmap, currently 21 June.
- 4.1.6 Consultation with members of the LSP/CSB and sub-groups is currently taking place but it is likely there will be a mixture of virtual and face to face partnership meetings going forward.
- 4.1.7 ASBAG will continue to run virtually and run an annual conference.

4.2 Customer Services Centre

- 4.2.1 The Customer Services Centre (CSC) has continued to provide telephone access to support residents, and completed service administration throughout the pandemic. We await corporate decisions regarding opening of TRH to review/resume face to face service delivery.

4.3 Environmental Protection

- 4.3.1 The waste, recycling, street cleansing, district inspections, grounds maintenance and animal welfare services continue to operate business as usual. Community outreach has been running virtually, but no 'in person' events have taken place. PACE interviews for our environmental enforcement team are expected to recommence from Step 4 in the Government's Roadmap, currently 21 June.
- 4.3.2 In the long term some community outreach may continue to operate virtually alongside and in support of face to face events.

4.4 Facilities

- 4.4.1 The facilities team have continued to operate business as usual with few exceptions. Manned guarding at Three Rivers House remains on hold whilst the longer term proposals for TRH opening hours are confirmed. This is being taken forward under the New Ways of Working project.
- 4.4.2 The Courier service is currently on hold whilst the van is being used by the Covid Marshals.

4.5 Housing

- 4.5.1 The majority of services are running business as usual. Officers have continued essential face-to-face meetings with rough sleepers and customers in temporary accommodation throughout the pandemic.
- 4.5.2 External site visits have continued to take place with home visits reintroduced from 17 May.
- 4.5.3 Homelessness interviews with customers are currently being held over the phone/virtually and will be held face to face if requested and considered appropriate going forward.

4.6 Revenues & Benefits

- 4.6.1 Revenues & Benefits has continued to operate mainly business as usual throughout the pandemic, with additional workload from processing Covid support grants.

4.7 *Trees & Landscapes*

- 4.7.1 Trees and Landscapes are continuing to look at ways to improve online accessibility for residents. This includes the introduction of a new online system for residents to review Tree Preservation Order (TPO) information and anything else relating to Trees. Residents are still being encouraged to submit photographs as part of their tree work applications. A number of external meetings over the past year have taken place virtually and it is planned that this will continue where possible, unless there is a need to meet on site. We also plan to have a mix of face-to-face team meetings, but with a virtual option if a staff member cannot attend in person.

5 *Services currently operating business as usual:*

5.1 *Corporate Services*

- 5.1.1 All aspects of the service have continued remotely business as usual with no adverse effects throughout, and it is intended that all aspects of the service including communications will continue remotely for the foreseeable future.

5.2 *Economic & Sustainable Development*

- 5.2.1 The Economic & Development Plans Service has continued all functions throughout the pandemic with all services being delivered as normal. Preparation of the Local Plan, South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Annual Monitoring, Brownfield Register, Right to Build Register, Neighbourhood Planning have all been progressed as normal.
- 5.2.2 It is intended that the majority of the service will continue to operate remotely going forward including the Local Plan, South West Herts JSP, CIL, Annual Monitoring, Brownfield Register, Right to Build Register, Neighbourhood Planning, and the South West Herts JSP. Certain aspects of the new Economic Development Officer's role will involve some face to face work including meeting with stakeholders at business addresses.

5.3 *Electoral Services*

- 5.3.1 The May 2021 elections were managed very successfully across Three Rivers despite considerable additional workload in order to comply with the Covid regulations. It is expected that the majority of Covid restrictions will not be required for the May 2022 elections, however some operational aspects and processes are expected to be retained where they have shown to be positive improvements such as separate break areas for counting staff.

5.4 *Finance*

- 5.4.1 With the exception of Fraud detailed above, the majority of the service has continued business as usual throughout with limited disruption to the service. It is intended that the majority of the service will continue to operate remotely going forward.

5.5 *Human Resources*

- 5.5.1 HR continues to operate business as usual, with no work delays, providing advice and support across the Council.

5.6 ICT

- 5.6.1 ICT have continued to operate business as usual. The transition from Amicus to Littlefish for the new service desk and network operation centre is a significant project requiring a lot of resource. Supporting Elections across both Councils has had an impact on the service due to additional support required.

5.7 Legal & Democratic Services

- 5.7.1 The Legal team continue to operate with an increased workload due to additional legislation to interpret, providing advice for services impacted by Covid restrictions and significantly increased workload in criminal litigation / ASB.
- 5.7.2 The Committees team continue with a high workload in responding to the transition back to face to face Committee meetings.

5.8 Property Services

- 5.8.1 Property Services team have continued with all aspects of the service across the estate. Service pressures are expected to be relieved with the recent appointment of a new Head of Service.

6 Partnerships and Linked Organisations

- 6.1 Watford and Three Rivers Trust continue to offer the Community Herts Help project supporting people with wellbeing calls, prescription collections and shopping. We are now in a transition period but prescription service continues to be an issue for people who are isolated and elderly and the usual service from pharmacies is not back to normal. We are working with Hertfordshire County Council on the future of the project to ensure this service through our voluntary sector partners can be stepped up or on offer in case of any future lockdowns or winter pressure on NHS services.
- 6.2 The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) are starting to have face to face appointments again – there remains pressure on this service with complex problems being faced. They will be maintaining a mix of home and office working for the foreseeable future to allow for social distancing in the office. Clients are being seen by appointment at Oxhey and Abbots for debt, sickness and disability benefits and family law, and Rickmansworth will be opening Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays by appointment. They are seeing a rise in debt cases and the county wide HERT project with the CAB offering money advice for people with complex needs is facing increased referrals for people at risk of homelessness.
- 6.3 The Police have continued to operate out of Three Rivers House throughout the pandemic.

7 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 The recommendations set out above outline the proposed timescale and process of restoring Council services following Covid guidance and legislation.

8 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 8.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy.
- 8.2 There may be budget implications and these are being assessed and reported to Policy and Resources Committee via budget monitoring.

9 Financial Implications

9.1 See paragraph 8.2 above.

10 Legal Implications

10.1 The Council has acted and continues to act in accordance with Covid related Legislation and guidance in the suspension and restoration of its various services.

11 Equal Opportunities Implications

11.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

12 Staffing Implications

12.1 The Council's Gold Business Continuity Team consisting of the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service continue to meet 3 times a week to discuss Covid matters.

12.2 The Council's Silver/Service Restoration Team consisting of the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service, and managers continue to meet fortnightly to manage service recovery.

12.3 The Covid-19 Action group made up of Officers from several departments continues to meet weekly to enable the Council to respond to any Covid-19 matters in the community as they arise.

13 Environmental Implications

13.1 None specific.

14 Community Safety Implications

14.1 None specific.

15 Public Health implications

15.1 The continued impact of Covid restrictions is likely to have a number of adverse effects on the local community, including those suffering with mental health issues, a potential rise in Domestic Abuse and those on low incomes or who may have been made redundant recently as well as a negative effect on physical health and wellbeing.

15.2 The reopening of group sessions and leisure activities will likely have a positive impact on people's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

15.3 The Covid-19 Action Group and Designated Safeguarding Leads continue to work with partners to support those most in need and make any referrals to key services.

16 Customer Services Centre Implications

16.1 None specific.

17 Communications and Website Implications

17.1 The website and communications will take place accordingly in line with when specific services are restored.

18 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

18.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Description of the risk	What happens if the risk was to occur	List control measures that are, or could be put in place	How will the risk be dealt with *	Enter the residual risk score
Services are not fully or partially restored.	Three Rivers residents do not receive full or partial services following the Covid-19 pandemic.	Priorities agreed and service restoration takes place as soon as possible.	Risk Assessments and Government guidance will be followed and services restored.	4
Negative Public Perception on Council Services	Satisfaction ratings within the Council will reduce and the number of complaints may increase	Priorities agreed and service restoration takes place as soon as possible.	Risk Assessments and Government guidance will be followed and services restored.	4
Spread of COVID-19 within services restored	Negative publicity and further spread of the illness	Risk assessments completed and procedures implemented in line with Government guidance.	Responsible officers will complete risk assessments and procedures and ensure compliance.	4

18.2 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- ▼ Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact Low -----► Unacceptable				

Impact Score

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

19 Recommendation

19.1 That: Policy & Resources Committee agree and approve the approach set out in this report for adoption.

Report prepared by: Josh Sills, Watersmeet Manager

Data Quality

Data checked by: Kimberley Grout, Head of Housing Services

Data rating:

1	Poor	
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2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

Background Papers

1. *Covid-19 Restrictions Impact on Services Report – 25 January 2021 P&R Committee*
2. *Service Priority General Update Report & Watersmeet Reopen Report – 16 November 2020 Covid-19 Response Sub-committee*
3. *Service Restoration Priority Ratings 4 and 5 Report – 5 October 2020 Covid-19 Response Sub-committee*
4. *Service Restoration Priorities Report – 3 September 2020 Covid-19 Response Sub-committee*
5. *Service Restoration Report – 21 July 2020 Covid-19 Response Sub-committee*

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Government Roadmap – Service Restoration – June 2021