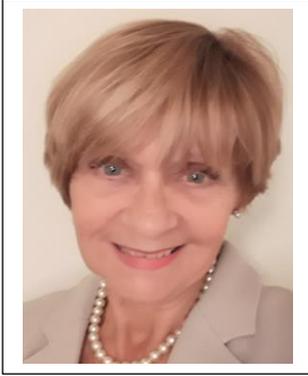




**Review of Council's
Community Support Response
to the First Wave of the
COVID19 Pandemic**



Foreword by Councillor Dianne Lloyd Chair of the Operations and Place Shaping scrutiny board

Undoubtedly, every effort was made by all involved; from the officers of Havant Borough Council (HBC) and East Hants District Council (EHDC), the Council's partners and the many unsung heroes in the community who worked tirelessly to help and support those residents in our midst who, for many and various reasons, are vulnerable and in need of assistance.

Exceptional leadership was shown by the executive officers who convened a COVID19 team as early as February 25. By March 18 decisions were being made on all aspects of the lockdown which was then announced by the prime minister on March 23. Throughout the lockdown and beyond, communications were produced in innovative and responsive ways. From the more than once-a-day updates to the website, its redesign for easy and quick access, updates on the Council's Facebook page and the use of twitter, to the Serving Councillors e-letters and virtual face-to-face briefings for councillors, it's clear that a herculean effort on communications to residents, councillors and staff took place when they were most needed.

As a result of swift and certain decision making and action, the Local Response Centre (LRC) staffed by officers - 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week - from across the services in both HBC and EHDC, was ready to receive and act upon calls from the 0333 370 4000 Hantshelp4vulnerable helpline, set up by the lead authority, Hampshire County Council (HCC).

It was regrettable that the lead authority could not release the helpline number at the same time as the LRC went "live". This caused a delay in having the leaflet '*Your Council is here to help you*' printed. The Panel's view is that was a vital piece of communication because it was posted to every household in the borough, signposting how to get help if needed.

The level of outbound, welfare calls to non-shielded residents, who could be considered vulnerable but who had not made contact with the helpline, was admirable and must be applauded. Between 30 April and 21 May 5,597 calls were made and over 50 referrals for support, placed.

On May 7, the Lead Authority asked districts to make contact with those shielded residents who had not been heard from, by the helpline. In order to ensure everyone was alright, a team of four officers led by the Enforcement Manager for Neighbourhood Quality, ended up making home visits to 42 residents of HBC and 45 of EHDC. This shows outstanding commitment to serve the community and is an indicator of the work carried out by so few that has gone unseen by the many.

The combined forces of HBC and EHDC went even further. Nearly 8,000 calls were made to those shielded residents by 113 redeployed officers, in two phases. The first phase was a courtesy call which checked if the resident had enough support at that time. Phase two took place as the government food parcel deliveries were coming to an end, to make sure those residents were able to access food supplies. This initiative was not mandated as part of the community support process headed up by HCC. As such, executive officers are to be congratulated for it, and the way in which they were able to take the staff along with them in the desire to complete this hands-on community role.

The Civil Enforcement Team not only delivered food to the food banks to keep them supplied; they also carried e-Credit cards with which they could purchase essential supplies in cases of real food shortage emergency. This, together with all the other exemplary service by our officers, was vital to some of the most hardest hit in our society.

There were frustrations surrounding positions of readiness, the sharing of data between the lead authority and districts and the roles of some organisations during the lockdown. However, I am convinced the lessons learnt from this unprecedented event have enabled all those involved to strengthen their resources and relationships. Following on from the success of the effort expended in the first wave of the corona virus, and as we all move forward in this new, dynamic, normal way of life, those most at risk in our society will be supported as they need to be. Thank you.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The following is a synopsis of the proceedings and recommendations made by the COVID19 Scrutiny – Community Support Review Task and Finish Panel (“the Panel”) to consider the Council’s community support response during the first wave of the COVID19 pandemic.
- 1.2 In June this year Cabinet requested the Governance, Audit and Finance Board to undertake a review of the Council’s response to the COVID19 pandemic. This was accepted by the Board at the Joint Scrutiny Board held on 22 June 2020. Therefore, for the purposes of the Scrutiny Standing Orders set out in the Constitution, the Governance, Audit and Finance Board is, for this review, the Parent Board.
- 1.3 Due to the amount of work involved, The Governance, Audit and Finance Board (GAF Board) divided the scrutiny review into a number of areas and asked the Operations and Place Shaping (OPS) and Business and Commercial Services (BACS) Boards to help with this review by reviewing specified areas and reporting their findings back to GAF Board before the end of August. At the Joint Scrutiny Board held on 22 June, members of the OPS Board accepted this referral and agreed to complete the review and report back to the Board by the end of August 2020. The time for completion was extended by the Chairman of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board to enable the panel to undertake a thorough review.
- 1.4 This report should be read in conjunction with the separate document entitled “Background Papers to the Review of COVID19 Scrutiny” “Background Papers” and may be viewed on-line using the following link: [to be inserted)

2.0 Recommendations – Report on Community Support and Communications aspects of HBC’s Response to COVID19

- 2.1 The Operations and Place Shaping scrutiny board - acting as a Task & Finish Panel for this scrutiny topic only – recommends that:
 - 2.1.1 A register of all community volunteer groups is drawn up - which includes the contact details of each group’s coordinator – and is retained and reviewed-quarterly to ensure there is, at all times, a current list of any and all volunteer groups operating in the borough who could provide support to vulnerable residents.
 - 2.1.2 A ‘go to’ document showing best practices to be adopted by volunteers supporting vulnerable residents be produced in readiness for distribution to any and all community groups taking on this role in the borough to avoid piece-meal and late distribution of information.
 - 2.1.3 Every ward councillor – for Borough and County - be made aware quarterly and again in the event of any emergency which required support to be given to vulnerable residents, of the information in recommendation 1 above, so they can act as a resource of information for volunteer coordinators.
 - 2.1.4 During a period of community support, data showing the number of vulnerable residents being supported in each ward, or by each community volunteer group if they are covering more than one ward, is gathered on a weekly basis so that a complete picture of the extent of volunteer activity is known which can be used for ongoing and future planning purposes.

- 2.1.5 Text for a piece of printed communication material such as a flyer, be drafted in readiness, containing the information residents will need about how to access support if they find themselves requiring assistance during a period of restricted movement in the community. (At present the Hants4help phone line remains 'live'; in the future this helpline number could change).
- 2.1.6 The printed communication in 2.5 above should be printed and distributed to every household in areas of the borough that become subject to any national or local restrictions of movement in the community, at the earliest possible time to ensure everyone receives the same message, especially those residents who cannot use the internet.
- 2.1.7 Communication with councillors be made as soon as is feasible once any restrictions on movement in the community are agreed, giving them the detailed information about how support will be given to their residents (see 2.3 above).
- 2.1.8 Once councillors are given the information about how support in the community will be given in their ward, they should liaise with the relevant group / organisation in order to play their part signposting, advising and generally helping volunteer groups to support their residents. This should be encouraged by the Leader of the Council.
- 2.1.9 Councillors be included in the welfare checks. The Cabinet Lead for 'People' should ensure this happens in the event of any local or national emergency.
- 2.1.10 Any money allocated for 'school-holiday-time' food for children who are entitled to free school meals during term time, is targeted at those families, through their schools, for the school holidays.
- 2.12 *The Panel has been made aware that following developments by central government over the weekend 7th and 8th November 2020 on funding for school-holiday-food where children qualify for free school meals, it is anticipated that Hampshire County Council – who is responsible for education – will take the lead on this and a voucher scheme for those specific families implemented; however, scrutiny retains its right to review how these funds are disseminated to ensure these specific children's families are the recipients of the funding in the most appropriate and easily-accessible way.*

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The support provided by the Council has been exemplary and has been recognised by the residents of the Borough. However, there has been a failure in communicating the level of this support to ward Councillors.
- 3.2 The support has demonstrated the agility of the Council's staff to undertake work outside their specialisms.
- 3.3 An opportunity to involve and take advantage of the local knowledge held by ward Councillors has been missed.
- 3.4 The Panel is satisfied that provided that 3.1. and 3.2 are corrected that the Council is in a position to respond effectively to a second wave of COVID19.

4.0 The Panel

4.1 The Review was undertaken by the Operations and Place Shaping (OPS) scrutiny board, acting for this scrutiny only, as a Panel which included the following members:

Councillor Lloyd (Chair of the OPS scrutiny board and Lead Councillor in this Panel format)
Councillor Carpenter (part of the time of the review)
Councillor Howard
Councillor Jenner
Councillor Milne
Councillor Raines
Councillor Gwen Robinson
Councillor Scott
Councillor K Smith
Councillor B Francis – co-opted member

4.2 *The Panel would like to record its gratitude to the Members and Officers of Havant Borough Council for making themselves available to meet with the Panel. Full details of these members and officers may be found in the document entitled “Background Papers”.*

4.3 *The Chair of the Operations and Place Shaping scrutiny board, who chaired this Panel, would like to express her gratitude to the Head of Service for Housing and Community in particular, for her positive response to the content of this report, and for her expediency of actions regarding any and all matters over which the Panel made comment. The Chair would also like to thank the CEO and Director for supporting scrutiny in such a positive and responsive manner.*

5.0 Terms of Reference

5.1 The panel agreed to focus on the following areas:

- a) What is the challenge for providing community engagement and community development support?
- b) What is the quantifiable and qualitative impact (positive, negative) on the borough of Havant?
- c) To what extent has the Council worked with voluntary / mutual aid groups?
- d) What groups of vulnerable people have been impacted on more than others, and how does this compare to pre-COVID?
- e) What has our response been to date and what lessons have we learnt?
- f) What problems have we experienced?

- g) What does the future look like, and what is the phasing / timing of possible future impacts?
- h) What is the national, regional and partner response likely to be?
- i) What is within our control and what is not?
- j) Where is the current and future response to this articulated, managed and monitored? E.g. Corporate plan? Business Plans? Boards? Recovery Plans?
- k) What are the challenges for responding to new / emerging legislation in addition to the existing statutory functions for Environmental Health?

6.0 What was not included in the review

- 6.1 The purpose of this review was to scrutinise the level of the service delivery. The findings of the review, which relate to matters other than service delivery, will feed into the other reviews being undertaken into the Council's COVID19 response.

7.0 Methodology

- 7.1 The Panel's activity fell into 7parts:

(a) Review of Background Information

Throughout the review the members of the Panel had access to the report on the Council's COVID19 response submitted to Cabinet on 1 July 2020 and to the resource pack established by the Local Government Association, which included examples on how other Councils had reacted to the COVID19 pandemic

(b) Interviews with the relevant officers

To discuss the Council's support to vulnerable people during the first wave of the COVID19 pandemic.

(c) Survey of Members of Havant Borough Council

To gain an understanding from HBC Councillors about the level of support needed and given in the borough, together with their experience and opinion about the communications from HBC to you and your residents.

The results of this exercise are set out in the Background Papers.

(d) Briefing Note from Community First

The Council was not, of course, acting alone. The success of its response relied upon how well it worked with its partners and in particular Community First.

Therefore, the Board wanted to learn from Community First how well information was shared, co-ordinated effort, and co-operated with that organisation in response to this pandemic.

(e) Briefing Notes from Hampshire County Councillors

The success of the Council's response depended on how well it worked with its County Council (HCC). Therefore, the Panel wrote to all County Councillors representing this Borough with the aim of learning their experience on how well the Councils shared information, co-ordinated and co-operated in their response to this pandemic.

(f) Briefing Note from Hampshire County Council's Cabinet Lead for Adult and Social Care

The Panel wished to learn from the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health how well the Council worked with the County Council.

(h) Arriving at recommendations

8.0 Principles of the Review

8.1 Before the Panel arrived at its recommendations it decided that its deliberations should be underpinned by the following principles:

- (i) the recommendations should be based on a transparent and logical construct that is understandable and justifiable.
- (iii) all recommendations should be based on evidence; and
- (iv) any recommendations should be simple to administer.

8.2 The Panel has set out its deliberations in this report to assist Members and the public to understand its approach. While the Panel's recommendations are not mandatory it is hoped that if the Governance, Audit and Finance Board disagrees with the recommendations of this review that it would accept the Panel's logic. The recommendations presented in this report at the present time represent the view of the Panel and not the official view of Havant Borough Council.

Evidence Considered

9.0 Key Messages and Observations

9.1 Councillors' Concerns

9.1.1 A survey of Councillors indicated that 60% of the respondents considered that the support provided to vulnerable residents was average with 40% feeling it was below average¹. Although these results were a representative of 39% of the Councillors there did appear to be areas that needed improvement. Therefore, the Panel took a deeper look into the support provided and the framework within which this support had been provided.

9.2 Accuracy of the Data provided

9.2.1 Unfortunately, the data submitted to the Panel was incomplete as the officers could only report on where the formal network was involved with the referrals. The Council was aware that in some areas, such as Emsworth, groups took their own referrals. Although, Community First had requested this information from the Community Co-ordination Group, this information had not been forthcoming. Therefore, the findings of this Panel were based on the information available at the time of the review.

9.2.2 Although Community First had requested information from the Community Co-ordination Group, this information had *not* been forthcoming.

9.3 What is within the Council's control and what is not?

9.3.1 Although the Council had some flexibility on how it delivered support at a local level, its response was limited by the framework set out below. Havant Borough Council was therefore truly grateful to any and all support within the community that may have gone unnoticed.

Roles and Responsibilities Framework

National Level

9.3.2 At a national level the lead responsibility for providing overall multi-agency command, control, and co-ordination throughout the different phases of the pandemic lies with COBRA with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) playing a key role.

Local Level

Lead Authority

9.3.3 For this emergency Hampshire County Council was the lead authority

Local Resilience Forum

¹ Full details of the survey results are included in the Background Papers

9.3.4 In Hampshire, as in all other areas of the country, a support hub for vulnerable people was established across Local Authorities. In the Hampshire area, County and City Councils, Public Health, District Councils, the Voluntary sector and faith communities worked together to some degree as part of the Coronavirus response called the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum (HIOW LRF). The forum coordinated responses, disseminates learning, escalated issues and provided mutual aid when protecting the most vulnerable in response to COVID1. This included provision of support for those who might struggle to access services, such as rough sleepers and all frail and vulnerable adults requiring help who may have been 'shielding' or experiencing social isolation.

9.3.5 The principle membership of the HIOW LRF is formed of those agencies designated as Category 1 responders within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. These agencies are:

Basingstoke & Deane Council	NHS England South East (HTV)
Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service	NHS England South East (HTV)
East Hants District Council	Hampshire Constabulary
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	New Forest District Council
Eastleigh Borough Council	Hampshire County Council
Portsmouth City Council	Rushmoor Borough Council
Environment Agency	Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service
Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust	Solent NHS Trust
Fareham Borough Council	Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Public Health England South East	Southampton City Council
Gosport Borough Council	Hart District Council
South Central Ambulance Service - NHS Foundation Trust	Havant Borough Council
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust	Isle of Wight Council
Test Valley Borough Council	Wight NHS Trust University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
Isle of Wight NHS Trust – Ambulance Service	Winchester City Council

9.3.6 A Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) led the response to the pandemic and strategic objectives were defined from the outset. The role of the SCG was to coordinate efforts, to ensure that all programmes of activity delivered by the HIOW LRF supported the overall strategic aims and to report up to central Government.

The LRF was supported by:

- (a) The National Health Service
- (b) 11 Local Resource Centres (LRCs) - set up by district councils in partnership with local voluntary sector organisations, whereby groups and local councils, could draw on local volunteers. This combined effort provided local support to access food, prescription collection and other forms of support.
- (c) the County Council's Adult Health and Care Welfare Team where more complex needs and personal care requirements are identified. They could also draw on voluntary support from LRCs in addition to other care and support provision. They would pick up any issues related to adult safeguarding or domestic abuse and any urgent issues.
- (d) Community First - took a lead role on behalf of the Community Voluntary Services (CVS) network and voluntary sector to support the LRF and LRCs. Full details of the roles of Community First is set out in the Background papers.

This Council's Local Response Centre

- 9.3.7 A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the County, Community First and the Council stating that the Council would run the Local Response Centre with Community First able to support the Council in this role should it be required. Community First focused on the co-ordination of volunteers for some wards within the borough.
- 9.3.8 Community First supported some local groups with safeguarding and training. A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding is included in the Background Papers.
- 9.3.9 Havant Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council also set up a virtual call centre known as the Local Response Centre (LRC) and staff from both Councils were redeployed to answer calls from people seeking assistance in the Havant and East Hants areas. The centre was manned between 9 am and 5pm, seven days per week.
- 9.3.10 The purpose of the centre was to receive calls from the Hantshelp4vulnerable number, decide which ward the resident lived in and pass the details to the community group for that ward to ensure the needs of the resident - such as shopping, collection of prescribed medicine, the delivery of food parcels, dog walking, set-up a regular phone call for anyone feeling lonely and isolated etc – were going to be met by that community support group.
- 9.3.11 Where the needs of the resident were more urgent or complex, the staff member handling the call made a referral to other agencies, such as Adult Social Care and Community First.
- 9.3.12 *The Panel acknowledges the extent of the work done by the staff who manned the Local Response Centre and is grateful to them all for their decision-making and commitment to ensuring that every caller was helped appropriately.*
- 9.3.13 All residents in the Council area also received a newsletter advertising the contact details of the County's Hantshelp4vulnerable (the helpline) helpline number.

9.3.14 Many community support groups were contacted direct because they delivered their own flyers to households in their areas, which was the case in Stakes and Emsworth.

Hayling Island had a different approach which appointed a coordinator for many streets, to ensure anyone needing help could receive it from either the activity carried out on Hayling Island or that an onward referral as above, was made.

9.3.15 Community First worked well with the Council's officers and food banks in the borough.

9.3.16 *The Panel was impressed with the effort provided by so many different sources throughout the Borough.*

9.4 Homeless people and Rough Sleepers

9.4.1 Following a directive from MHCLG on 26 March 2020, for Local Authorities to safeguard homeless people from COVID19 by bringing them in off the street, officers block-booked six rooms at Buriton where the landlord had been incredibly supportive ensuring additional cleaning and safeguarding mechanisms were put in place for those placed there.

9.4.2 Twenty-one households were placed into B&B. Twenty households refused the offer and made alternative arrangements to house themselves.

9.4.3 Officers worked with more than 130 households over the period and as at 22 June 2020 there were 42 households still in emergency accommodation. Officers from HBC or staff from the Two Saints charity contacted all households in B&B on a weekly basis to ensure their well-being and update those who were in the process of 'move on' plans.

9.4.4 *The Panel was pleased to learn that so many people who had been sleeping rough or otherwise presenting as homeless were found safe accommodation during the lockdown period. The Panel was not sure however, what happened to the households that were living in B&B when the lockdown was released. This question has been put to the Head of Service for Housing and the Panel is happy to receive an update informally.*

9.4.5 *The Panel would also like to know if any temporary sites were needed and found for gypsies and travellers in the Havant borough during lockdown and, if so, the current status of those sites.*

9.4.6 *The Panel was concerned to learn that the staff who undertook this highly sensitive, complex and challenging work, whereby face-to-face interviews were obviously the most desirable way to work with people, did not all receive the appropriate IT equipment throughout the lockdown and in fact that situation had not been completely resolved until October.*

9.4.7 *The Panel wished to express its thanks to those particular staff. The Panel recognised that the consequences of lockdown on families' finances and relationships would see a surge in the threat of homelessness over the coming weeks and months.*

9.5 Summary of the Process in Supporting Vulnerable Residents?

9.5.1 As part of the Hampshire County Council area response, a helpline called Hantshelp4vulnerable was established where advisers triaged calls from vulnerable people who were seeking help. The number to call was 0333 370 4000.

9.5.2 Callers were:

- a) provided with information and signposting including, where appropriate, to the NHS (2,835²)
- b) referred to 11 district based Local Response Centres (LRCs) where they were connected to local support in order to access food, prescription collection and other forms of support (as above) – provided by and in partnership with local voluntary sector organisations, groups and local councils, drawing on local volunteers (6,127³)
- c) referred to the County Council's Adult Health and Care Welfare Team where more complex needs and personal care requirements were identified. The call handlers were able to pick up any issues related to adult safeguarding or domestic abuse and other urgent issues. (3,107⁴)

9.5.3 As agreed by all agencies, Adults' Health and Care Welfare Team took the lead role in proactively contacting all residents identified as extremely clinically vulnerable by the Government who had not registered online for the government-funded food parcel scheme, or who had registered and had requested support due to delays in provision through the Government scheme, or where the Government scheme did not meet their requirements.

9.5.4 53,225 residents in Hampshire had been identified by the NHS as extremely vulnerable and advised to shield or take special caution, in addition to universal social distancing measures during the outbreak.

9.5.4 A flow chart of the process was set out in the background papers. It was important to note that although under this process the Council played a leading part, a majority of this support was delivered indirectly to vulnerable residents e.g. the Council supplied non-perishable food to the food banks. However, it was the food banks that supplied the food to the vulnerable residents. Also, volunteers working for community groups did shopping for vulnerable residents, or collected shopping that had been bought over the phone or by click n' collect, as the need arose, especially when delivery slots were unavailable and / or the vulnerable resident did not use the internet.

9.6 The County Council's Response

9.6.1 The County Council used a range of communication methods, such as texts, messaging to land lines, out bound calls and home visits depending on the circumstances and contact details made available by the Government. Initially, the County Council did a bulk text to make those on the list aware of the HantsHelp4Vulnerable Contact Centre. A proportion of the extremely vulnerable residents and indeed, other vulnerable people who were not on the extremely vulnerable list were already known to, or in receipt of social care services from the County Council and were contacted through community social work teams. Many GPs were also separately contacting their own vulnerable patients to ensure they were aware of support available.

² Local Resilience Forum Covid Welfare Response Scorecard – Last update 20th July

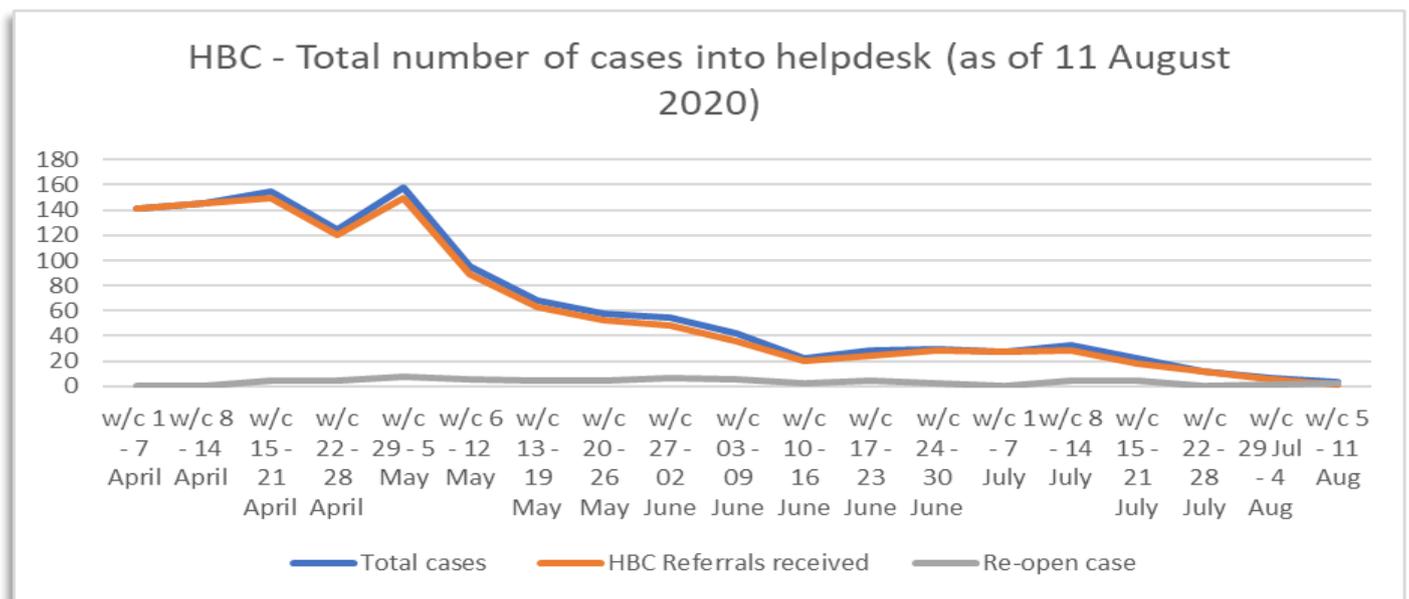
³ Ibid

⁴ ibid

9.7 Havant Borough Council's Response Centre

Helpdesk calls

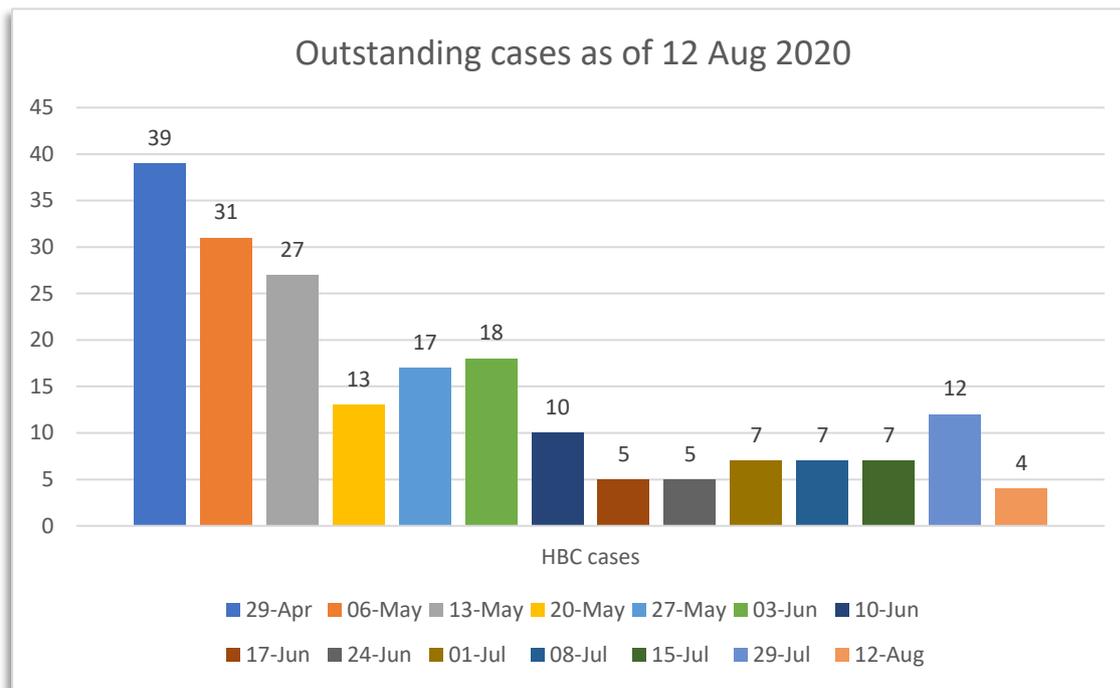
- 9.7.1 *The Panel was pleased to note that the Council's Local Response Centre for HBC (and EHDC) was ready to receive calls from the Hampshire County Council's HantsHelp4Vulnerable Contact Centre helpline (0333 370 4000), on Friday 27th March 2020. Unfortunately, the County Council, the lead Authority, directed that this local call centre could not become active until it had set up its helpline, which resulted in a delay of 4 days' before residents could use the system.*
- 9.7.2 *The Panel was unhappy with the delay and felt that it created an opportunity for community groups to take matters into their own hands by delivering flyers or other means of letting residents know who they could contact for support locally. While the Panel recognised that more help than less was best, it was aware that duplication of effort and confusion by residents about who to contact may have been caused in some incidences.*
- 9.7.2 A breakdown of the number of calls received by Local Response Centre is set out in the graph⁵ below:



Number of Cases

- 9.7.3 At its peak, the Council had 39 outstanding cases, which reduced to 4 cases at the end of the full lockdown period. Details of the number of outstanding cases is set in the graph below.

⁵ Havant Borough Council – Covid-19 Fortnightly Helpdesk Report (11 August 2020)



Welfare checks of shielded Vulnerable Residents (VRs)

9.7.4 On the 7 May 2020, HCC asked local Councils to carry out welfare checks on those people on the shielded list who the County Council had been unable to reach.

9.7.5 *The Panel was impressed to learn that within 24 hours of receiving the request, a team of 4 members of staff, headed by the Neighbourhood Manager was established. This team managed to complete the request (42 visits) within 3 days of the request being received.*

Support to potentially vulnerable residents not on the shielded list

9.7.5 The Executive Board initiated a project to proactively contact households (not on the shielded list) in the Borough. The list included anyone over the age of 70, in receipt of a form of benefit, had received a DFG and were on HBC’s assisted bins list (this cohort of residents became known as the “New Vulnerable”). The purpose of the initiative was to identify whether these residents required help to obtain food, medical supplies, or other support during the pandemic. If the resident articulated they would like help in accessing certain services or support, they were added to HBC’s database of vulnerable people and their details passed on to a volunteer group which could help them, e.g. by picking up shopping or prescribed medication etc. No other local authorities in Hampshire carried out this piece of work, on this scale.

9.7.6 Calls began on 27th April and were completed by 25th July (7926 calls made) - there were two phases:

- a) Phase 1 - checking in with potentially vulnerable customers
- b) Phase 2 - calling those in receipt of a food parcels to check they were aware of the delivery being stopped – we then worked with the resident if requested to find an alternative solution.

Staff came together to work from across all departments and both councils on both phases. There were 87 staff with a team of managers on hand, making a total of 113 staff from Havant Borough and East Hants District councils.

9.7.7 The Panel was grateful to the Executive Board for taking this initiative and know anecdotally that residents who received these caring calls were thankful and impressed.

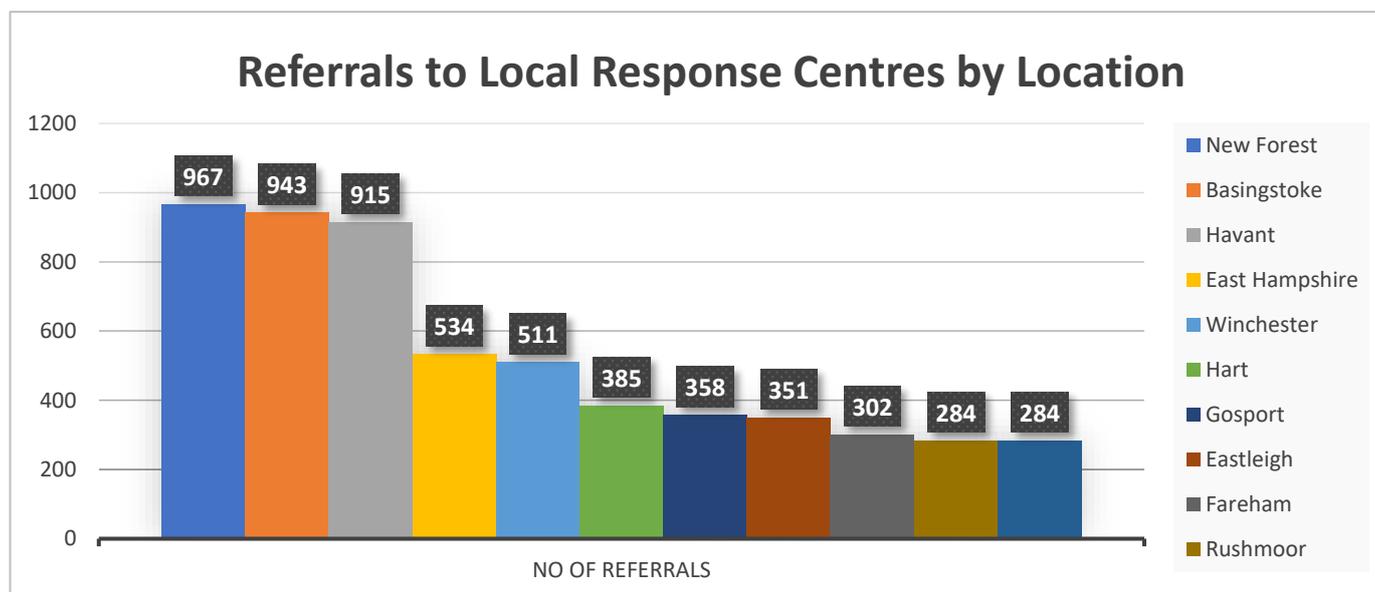
9.7.8 Food Hub

9.7.8.1 The Council's Community Team working with Community First set up a food hub to supply non-perishable to food banks or vulnerable residents. The Food Hub was located at the Leigh Park community centre, managed by one of the Council's managers and supported by Community First. This was used for storage only – the address was not publicised to the local residents. Although all supermarkets in the Borough were contacted, only Tesco in Havant were able to supply the required amount of food.

9.7.8.2 Emergency food parcels were delivered by the Civil Enforcement Team (CET), who used E-Cards to purchase emergency items as required. 76 Emergency food parcels were delivered by the CET between 14th April 2020 to 29th June 2020. The CET also delivered food to the food banks. Having the food hub meant food banks were kept supplied and where necessary, call handlers (from the LRC) could liaise with the CET who would then deliver food packs to those in dire need.

9.8 Comparing the 11 Local Response Centres

9.8.1 Havant received the third highest number of referrals from the County Council helpline as at 20 July⁶



9.8.2 Havant and East Hampshire set up and operated its own helpline, known as the Local Response Centre (LRC) .

⁶ Hampshire County Council Local Resilience Forum Covid Welfare Response Scorecard - LAST UPDATED 20th JULY 12:00

9.8.3 The amount of money spent on replenishing the Council's food hub was much less than other Councils. Approximately £500 was spent on stocking the Food Hub however total funding of around £18,000 has been spent on food supplies (Foodbanks, emergency shopping and food vouchers etc). This has been over the period of a year and includes the £500 for the Food Hub. All the funding was received from various Government grants to be used specifically for food. Spent and committed spend will take us through to September 2021 when the LRC will close.

9.9 Residents impacted by COVID19

9.9.1 Initially Vulnerable Residents who had to shield were affected the most. However, as the impact spread to the wider community as residents lost jobs and were waiting for their Universal Credit claims to come through, some were in financial need. Residents who were discharged from hospital for example in the evening and had to shield and had no food in the house also needed aid.

9.10 The challenge in providing community engagement and community support

9.10.1 One of the main challenges has been how to provide sufficient information to allow each agency/group to support its vulnerable residents within the data protection regulations.

9.10.2 This particularly caused a problem when the County Council was initially reluctant to share data with this Council. The data protection regulations and agreement with the County Council also prevent the Council from sharing some information with voluntary and community groups.

9.10.3 *The Panel is pleased to note that a data sharing agreement has now been signed with the County Council to overcome this issue.*

9.10.4 Problems were experienced when trying to secure accommodation for rough sleepers and the homeless for the following reasons:

- a) the NHS had block booked whole hotel chains for key workers.
- b) owners of B&B were more willing to work with key workers as opposed to rough sleepers.
- c) Premier Inns chose not to work with Councils, despite pressure from the government.

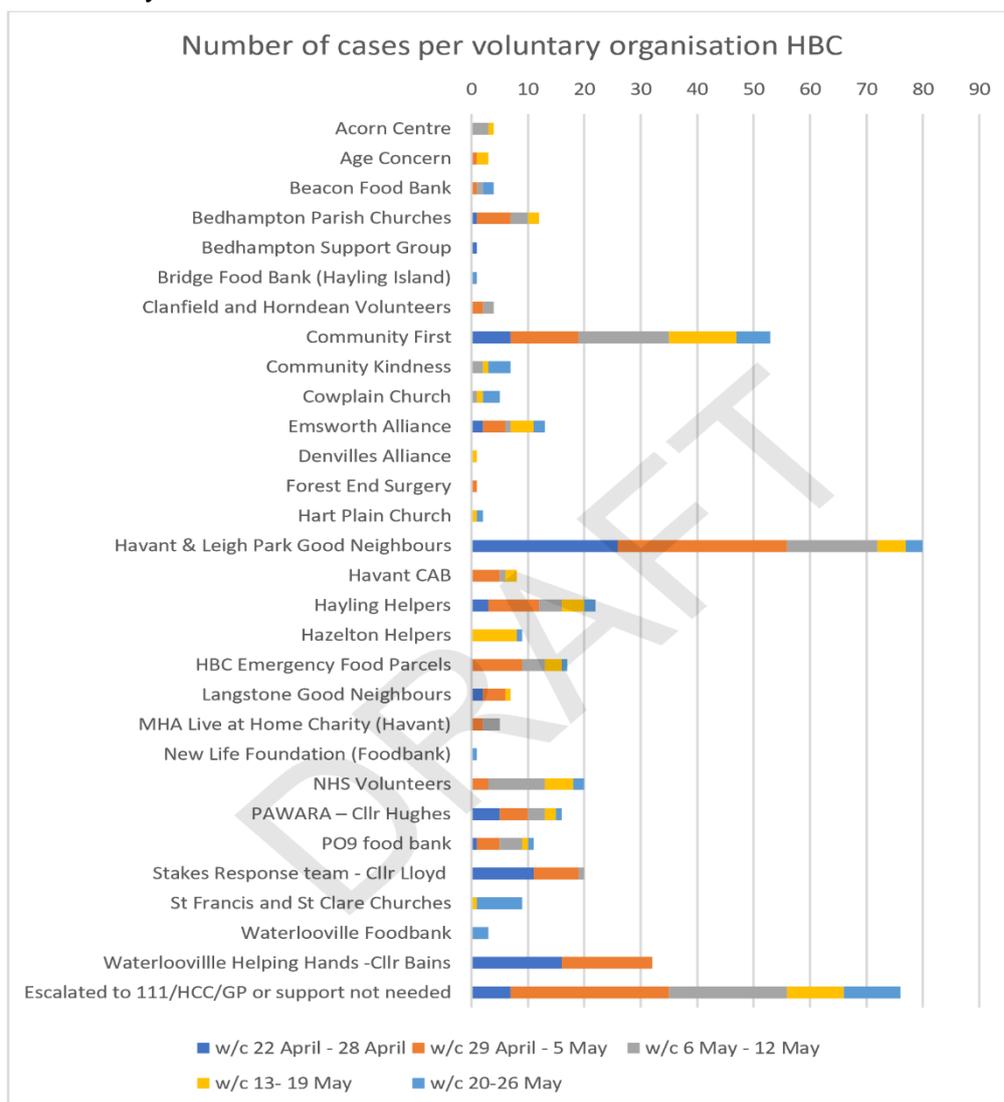
9.11 To what extent has the Council worked with voluntary / mutual aid groups?

9.11.1 The Council created a database of local voluntary groups within both Council areas using their own sources and information held by Community First.

9.11.2 *The Panel learned that despite the creation of a database of local voluntary groups, no data on a weekly / fortnightly / monthly basis was requested by the Council direct or via Community First such that the number of households actually supported throughout the period March to August is no recorded.*

9.11.3 The Panel has gathered information about the number of households some groups supported and estimates that – excluding Emsworth and Hayling Island – a further 400 vulnerable residents should be added to the data shown on the following graph. The Panel is pleased to note that a register of community groups in the Havant borough, including the contact details of the group coordinators and their reach and capacity, is going to be created by Community First and that a process will be put in place by CF to regularly update the data. The Panel will be happy to receive confirmation this has been done, informally.

9.11.2 As at 11 August 2020 the number of cases per voluntary organisation known by HBC / Community First was as follows⁷.



9.11.3 The Panel acknowledged that residents or councillors may not have been aware of the precise nature of the work carried out by Community First, including the coordination of support given direct to a number of vulnerable residents.

⁷ Source Appendix 4 of Cabinet Report submitted to Joint Scrutiny Board on 22 June 2020 (See Background Papers)

9.12 What Went Well and What Did Not Work Well

Internal Assessment

9.12.1 What Went Well

- The Local RESPONSE Centre was set up very quickly thanks to the “can do” attitude of those involved.
- The bulk food delivery arrangement with Tesco’s was difficult to achieve but once in place it worked
- Setting up the food hub in Havant
- Positive contribution from the Civil Enforcement Team
- Community teams working together across both authorities
- Positive personal journey for many individuals thanks to the support of colleagues
- Planning Policy Department early offer of assistance
- Many positive relationships have been forged including links with
 - Food Banks
 - Other Hampshire based local authorities
 - Community groups
 - Volunteer groups
 - A “Risk, Actions, Issues and Decisions” (RAID) register was set up for officer use and worked well as officers could keep track of actions and decisions– in hindsight this should have been set up from the start.
- Rushmoor taking a lead role in communication and feedback to HCC
- Setting up the Community Coordination Group (COG) in EHDC
- Setting up the Community Action Group in HBC
- Volume of outbound calls made by council officers
- Ability to evidence LRC take up and usage
- Set up of reporting system to monitor and react to foodbank needs
- Use of foodbank information enabled money and resource to be saved by not setting up a food hub in East Hants
- Speed of response to support gypsy and traveller groups in East Hants

9.12.2 What did Not Go Well

- Hampshire County Council coordination role – some delays at the outset – but good working relationships have been established
- Having insufficient time to train staff in different roles
- Mixed messaging over available budgets.
- Unable to use Capita customer service staff in Havant even though they had no work to do
- Multiple agencies put calls out for volunteers, this was uncoordinated and overwhelmed the local volunteer groups – better once COG set up
- Deployment of volunteers at first

- Representative from Ministry was not well enough informed to be able to provide clarity and answers in a timely fashion, leading to delay in critical decisions
- Central government appeared to lack knowledge of how local government operate, this caused duplication of effort locally and centrally
- Children who receive free school meals during term may not have received a voucher or their families may not have been made aware of how they could obtain food in line with the government's funding for these children, during school holidays.

9.12.3 Residents' Assessment

A survey sent to residents in place of the usual residents' survey to gauge how the local communities were feeling revealed the following:

What Went Well

- Positive feedback from residents saying they felt the council cared

What did Not Go Well

- Some residents reported they'd been called multiple times by different callers
- There was some confusion over role of the County Council and that of Havant Borough Council.
- Requests for social care and mental health intensive support came to Havant Borough Council rather than Hampshire County Council if residents could not get through to County, which delayed the resident reaching the specific help they needed.

9.12.4 Ward Councillors' Assessments

A survey of ward Councillors identified the follow assessments of the Council's response

What did Not Go Well

- Slow response from local authorities
- The individual voluntary groups were working a full capacity and could not have done more
- Confusing messaging as to where to receive support and help, or volunteer
- Vouchers promised for children's lunches were not available - but this was a government failure
- The Council failed to keep councillors in the loop.
- Leaders of the support groups were frustrated due to the lack of information regarding the vulnerable residents such as address, phone numbers, etc
- The Council did not provide enough funding and easy access to funding to support groups

9.12.5 Hampshire Councillors' Assessment

The County Councillors representing this Borough were asked to submit a brief to the Council to give an indication on how well they considered the County Council and LRCs worked together. However, as only two Councillors responded there is insufficient data to draw any reasonable conclusions from this response. (redacted copies of the responses are set out in the Background papers)

The Panel is fortunate that the Cabinet Lead for Adult and Social Care is a County Councillor representing the Borough did reply and her assessment was as follows:

What Went Well

- Good communications via an LRC group led by Patricia Hughes and Karen Edwards and supported via HCC relationship managers. Also well supported by the LRF structure and Graham Allen's meetings bringing together the VCS, Districts and the County Council

What Did Not Go Well

- Although communications improved as relationships developed during the pandemic between County and Districts, there was an initial problem with communication.

The Panel was disappointed to note that there was no communication about the situation of lockdown and vulnerable residents between County Councillors and Borough Councillors.

9.12 Lessons Learnt

9.13.1 The officers identified the following lessons learnt:

- a) The Council's response should be project planned by a project manager from the beginning of any future severe restrictions
- b) The Council should establish good communications with Community First earlier in the crisis to determine exactly what support they can provide and to whom.
- c) The Council should take time to pause, reflect and plan when the situation appears to be becoming overwhelming
- d) The Council should take time out to train staff.
- e) The Council should establish a network with other Local Authorities as early as possible to learn from their experience and identify best practices.
- f) The Council should delegate the authority to act to the lowest acceptable level to enable a speedy response.
- g) The Council should put in place support mechanisms for staff and managers involved in providing support to protect their wellbeing and health

9.13.2 *The Panel took the view that greater consultation with ward Councillors, who are the leaders in their local communities, should take place at the beginning of any severe restrictions, to inform each ward where their residents' support will come from.*

9.13.3 *The Panel considered that an opportunity had been lost by not consulting and speaking to ward Councillors on what was needed in their areas, where the most vulnerable residents might be housed, and how the crisis impacted on local communities.*

9.13.4 *The Panel noted that councillors who were coordinating support groups were not given any support by the Council for their well-being. In fact, no councillors were contacted during the lockdown by any staff or member of the Cabinet to check on their health and well-being which was regrettable especially as many on the Council are in a high-risk category.*

9.14 Actions Put in Place in the Event of a Second Wave

9.14.1 *The Panel noted that the following actions had been put in place in the event of a second wave:*

- a) HBC has completed an Impact Assessment in preparation for the Stabilisation phase and then the Recovery phase.
- b) HBC is in the process of preparing a local lockdown/second wave emergency response plan.
- c) HBC has produced a flowchart which details how the Local Response Centre would be reactivated and all related responsibilities; this can be done in less than 24 hours, including out of hours cover.
- d) HBC has defined all roles and responsibilities in the event of a second wave.
- e) HBC has 60 trained staff on a register to be reinstated into lockdown roles.
- f) HBC has prepared a Service Level Agreement with Community First to ensure clarity and timeliness in relation to advising and reinstating the local support groups and volunteers.

9.14.2 *The Panel was pleased to be given an assurance that the Council can be operational within less than 24 hours if a second wave happened tomorrow.*

9.14.3 *The Chair of the Operations and Place Shaping (OPS) scrutiny board has been shown the Plan in confidence – called the Outbreak Plan –which seeks to be the readiness plan for any subsequent local or national lockdown.*

9.14.4 *At the time of reviewing this report, the Chair has questions about the capacity and scope of the support that would be provided by community support groups and by the ability of Community First's organisation to co-ordinate community support and step into any gaps that could emerge, providing on-going support to all the residents who may need help. The Panel is happy to receive updates on these matters, informally.*