

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 25 August 2020

BY: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: COVID-19 – Management of Council Response & Recovery

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an up-to-date summary account of how the Council has responded to supporting the national public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic both in terms of our response and also our preparedness for recovery and renewal.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
- i note the contents of this report and to acknowledge the unprecedented effect the COVID-19 outbreak has had on both the East Lothian community and delivery of Council services;
 - ii thank the many community volunteers and Council staff who have come together to support the community response to supporting people in need across the county;
 - iii note the ongoing COVID-19 response in respect of service delivery and interventions necessary to continue to contain the spread of the virus, particularly the ongoing deployment of Business Continuity Plans in support of National Guidance and appropriate public health measures e.g. physical distancing etc.
 - iv note the development of COVID-19 recovery planning workstreams and their programmes of work, whilst observing on-going COVID-19 response activity; and,
 - v note a further updated COVID-19 Response and Recovery report will be presented to the next meeting of Council.

3 BACKGROUND

COVID-19 Response

- 3.1 With awareness of the developing COVID-19 outbreak worldwide, East Lothian Council Emergency Planning arrangements were refreshed during January and February 2020.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 17 March 2020, the Council held a special meeting to consider potential implications associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging national public health crisis. Since that time, Council decision-making has been operating under specific delegated emergency powers and arrangements and services continue to operate under their Business Continuity Plans.
- 3.3 On 23 March, the COVID-19 national 'lockdown' was called by the UK and Scottish Governments. Council Management Team (Crises Response Team) met immediately and Business Continuity Plans were formally invoked across all services on 24 March 2020, activating longstanding and detailed plans for dealing with emergencies. This meant that responding to the COVID-19 emergency became the Council's immediate priority. Our strategy throughout has been to follow Scottish Government Guidance and to ensure that the Council continues to provide public service, minimising the impact of the developing COVID-19 outbreak, ensuring critical services are prioritised and planning takes place for council services to recover beyond the outbreak.
- 3.4 The COVID-19 Command and Response Structure, see Appendix 1, with the Chief Executive as the designated 'Gold Command' within the Council's emergency planning arrangements, created a framework of local strategic leadership and oversight to the COVID-19 response. The Head of Communities & Partnerships was designated 'Silver Command' and tasked with leading the Council's COVID-19 Emergency Planning Response. The Council Management Team (CMT) have held COVID-19 CMT Meetings weekly, also attended by Police Scotland's Local Area Commander for East Lothian, and have operated an Emergency Crisis Response Team (CRT) Out of Hours (evening and weekend) planned response rota to provide effective leadership across services 24/7 throughout the COVID-19 Response.
- 3.5 As in any significant national emergency, e.g. "The Beast from the East", the Council's Emergency Planning COVID-19 response is guided by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 and the well-established national emergency planning response network, i.e. the Scottish Co-Ordination Group (SCG), the East of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership (EoSRRP) and Lothian and Borders Local Resilience Partnership (LRP), Local Authorities Resilience Group for Scotland (LARGS), and the Multi-Agency Co-Ordination Centre (MACC).
- 3.6 To oversee the operational response to the COVID-19 outbreak and activation of the Council's Emergency Planning arrangements, the East

Lothian Council COVID-19 Oversight Group (COG), attended by Service Managers and key officers across Council and Health & Social Care Partnership services, was established on 28 February 2020, chaired by the Head of Communities & Partnerships. The COG has now met 39 times, such has been the breadth and pace of co-ordinated response required to meet the local challenges of the COVID-19 emergency. Deployment of the national UK Government, Cabinet Office, Resilience Direct software, an online private 'network' which enables civil protection practitioners to work together during the preparation, response and recovery phases of an event or emergency following the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 requirements. By utilising Resilience Direct, East Lothian Council was able to facilitate the creation of a confidential information sharing depository accessed by all Council services and emergency planning partners, to aide timely and effective collaborative response to the developing COVID 19 emergency.

3.7 The COG quickly established a number of sub-groups to address specific COVID-19 obligations placed on local authorities and partners through the 4 Nations Coronavirus Action Plan, the Coronavirus Act 2020 and 'Scotland's Routemap Through and Out of the Crisis' and associated Scottish Government Guidance. These groups have included:

- Children's Services and Connected Community Hubs Working Group – to oversee the closure of schools and community centres (which took place w.e.f. 20 March 2020) and creation of Key Worker and Vulnerable Children Childcare Hubs and establishment of 6 Connected Community Resilience Bases, to support local volunteer efforts.
- Mass Fatalities Working Group – to plan for additional mortuary provision within the County should the COVID-19 death rate exceed local mortuary capacity.
- Shielding/Support for People Working Group – to respond to the Scottish Government's Support for People Programme providing COVID-19 advice, guidance, pharmacy, food and welfare support to East Lothian's 3462 shielding people - see Appendix 2.
- Food Working Group – to map, co-ordinate and deploy community based Scottish Government grant funds and initiatives to address food insecurity and support local food provision to those unable to access food due to COVID-19 consequences e.g. self-isolating, financial hardship.
- Support for Business Working Group – to oversee deployment of the national package of funding made available to support local businesses and to co-ordinate advice and guidance to the business sector.
- Open Spaces Working Group – to oversee and co-ordinate safe access to public spaces and deployment of Council and Police resources in support of the gradual easing of lockdown.

- Public Protection Enhanced Oversight Group - strategic leads from social work, health and police operated weekly meetings (initially) to oversee and monitor the safe and effective operation of multi-agency public protection arrangements. The Public Protection Critical Services Oversight Group moved from quarterly to fortnightly meetings to provide strategic governance and oversight of public protection as a response to the increased risks to public safety brought by the lockdown restrictions.
 - Chief Social Work Officer Enhanced Oversight - to ensure oversight of the impact of the lockdown restrictions on professional social work practice and implement the statutory requirements of the relevant parts of the Coronavirus legislation.
- 3.8 Services, partners and communities have been working tirelessly to protect vulnerable people and to ensure delivery of critical services whilst keeping customers and staff safe. At all times, we have supported our communities and our staff and followed Scottish Government Guidance. To help manage the risks associated in meeting this objective, a COVID-19 Corporate Risk was added to the Corporate Risk Register, reported to and approved under Emergency Recess arrangements on 26 May 2020.
- 3.9 Community Response: The Connected Communities Service established 6 Resilience Bases across the county, working in partnership with Community Councils, Area Partnerships and local third sector and voluntary groups. This enabled co-ordination of the extensive community support response required countywide. The Association of East Lothian Community Councils local Resilient Community Groups and Area Partnerships, responded to the call in support of the Council's emergency planning response, to stand up their local resilience groups – effective 20 March 2020 - to provide locally based welfare support across our communities, e.g. emergency food provision, pharmacy delivery, shopping, dog walking, activity packs, hearing aid batteries, welfare checks, etc. This saw 20 local Resilience Groups operate across the county providing sustained essential support to those most vulnerable and whose daily lives had been adversely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The formation of local Community Resilient Groups since 2013, supported by the Emergency Planning Team, has proven to be a pivotal and vital community collaboration in responding to this emergency. **The phenomenal contribution made by the hundreds of volunteers who have committed thousands of hours, days, weeks and months to supporting those most in need county-wide has been enduring, immense and highly valued.** This has been a prolonged emergency like no other ever experienced by our communities. East Lothian's network of community groups, 3rd Sector organisations and passionate and committed volunteers, have 'got us through' – we owe huge thanks to them all, with many only now 'standing down' their emergency response with the pausing of the Shielding Programme on 31 July 2020.
- 3.10 Communication – externally and internally - has been vital to our effective response to COVID-19.

External Communications: The Contact Centre has operated a bespoke COVID-19 Helpline throughout. A COVID-19 page was introduced on the Council's website, providing up-to-date public news and information about our COVID-19 response and changing service provision as we moved through the Phases of the Scottish Government's Routemap. This has been complemented by timely and informative Facebook and Twitter social media releases. East Lothian's local press and radio stations have contributed significantly by sharing news and local stories of interest to help keep our community well informed. As a listening Council, Elected Members have played a critical role in relaying local issues to Officers, to ensure quick response and resolution to issues as they arose county-wide.

Internal Communications: The Chief Executive has provided weekly briefings to Elected Members and employees. Weekly meetings have taken place between our Joint Trades Unions and Human Resources colleagues and 10 Employee Briefing Notes have been issued to ensure our workforce is up-to-date on employment matters affected by COVID-19. Regular employee wellbeing bulletins, particularly the introduction of 'Wellbeing Wednesday' alerts, have been issued to help those employees who might be struggling with anxiety or other mental health issues, directing them to appropriate sources of support.

- 3.11 The impact on Council services, customers and staff cannot be underestimated. 'Lockdown' saw the Council move to delivery of business critical activity and, to limit the spread of the virus, all Council staff who could work from home were asked to work from home - in some cases staff were reallocated to undertake work in other services where possible. Many Council buildings were 'mothballed' in order to follow the strict Scottish Government guidance to 'Stay at Home'.
- 3.12 The Council's COVID-19 response has been driven by our three East Lothian Council values: The East Lothian Way - Enabling, Leading and Caring.

Enabling – recognising that the Council cannot do everything itself, we have supported the vast voluntary effort that has risen up in all our communities.

Leading – the Council has led the response to the emergency in East Lothian ensuring that critical services continued to be delivered and quickly established vital services to protect vulnerable children, older people and those most at risk from the virus.

Caring – throughout the emergency we have put the needs of the vulnerable in our society and our communities at the heart of our response.

- 3.13 The Council's response to COVID-19 has been agile and flexible, built on the core behaviours we deploy in support of the ELC values. Examples of how our employees and partners have responded to COVID-19 in 'The East Lothian Way' are noted below:

WORKING TOGETHER - We collaborate with our partners, customers and colleagues to build strong and lasting relationships based on understanding, compassion, trust, integrity and mutual respect.

- We have relied on 20 Resilient Community Groups, 6 Area Partnerships and many local 3rd Sector and voluntary Groups across the county that have marshalled over 1,500 volunteers. Our Connected Community Managers and teams helped to support community resilience arrangements across our towns and villages providing valuable support to those who need help with shopping and other necessities. Property Maintenance have provided invaluable assistance with deliveries county-wide.
- In partnership with the NHS, our Health and Social Care Partnership and Children's Services have been working to protect vulnerable people, supporting care homes, providing vital home care services and supporting high risk vulnerable children.
- A number of Council services collaborated to create Children's Hubs – providing emergency childcare for the children of key workers and bespoke services for vulnerable children requiring additional support.
- Council services have been working very closely with Police Scotland in the enforcement of social/physical distancing regulations by providing advice to members of the public and businesses across the county.

BE THE BEST WE CAN BE – staff take responsibility and use their initiative to deliver the highest quality of services as efficiently and effectively as possible.

- Social care and social work staff continued to be on the front line delivering personal care to vulnerable individuals while maintaining relationships to help individuals, families and cared for young people to make positive changes. This was particularly challenging with limited home visits and face to face contact and instead relying on phone calls to maintain contact.
- Adult Resource Centres operated in Port Seton and Tynebank supporting those service users identified at the highest level of risk; additional outreach support has been provided in service user homes and weekly contact made with all service users, families/carers and providers.
- All Care Homes operated as normal with support from the Health and Social Care Partnership to ensure safe and effective patient care; physical distancing measures have been practised and personal protective equipment has been supplied to homes as needed with a regular PPE support hub established in East Lothian Community Hospital.

- Our residential staff are also challenged with supporting cared for young people during the 'lockdown' and advising them on the importance of social/physical distancing when, like young people everywhere, they wish to be out and about socialising with friends.
- Many services have had to adapt the way they operate to enable staff to continue to provide services whilst working from home; for example processing applications for crisis grants from the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- Maintaining the regular cycle of domestic, food and recycling waste collection and introducing a monthly garden waste collection service across the county.
- Over 2,000 council staff, including teachers had to adapt to working from home to continue to deliver services whilst some were reallocated to support work outwith their normal areas of work.
- To ensure sound financial management and provide some headroom to focus on the financial implications of COVID-19 upon the 2020/21 operating year, an early decision was taken to designate the proper and effective closure of the 2019/20 financial year in accordance with normal statutory requirement. This allowed the submission of the unaudited accounts to Audit Scotland by the end of June and for the annual external audit processes to continue.

INITIATE & EMBRACE CHANGE – the Council and its staff embrace the need for change and initiate new ways of working.

- Our Registration Service extended to a 7 day a week service. As government regulations temporarily suspended the registration of births and postponed marriages, our Registrars developed systems for registering deaths online and over the phone.
- The catering service quickly established a new system to ensure the continuation of lunches to families that qualify for free school meals – delivering over 1,000 weekly lunch packs.
- Several services joined forces to develop systems for processing Business Support Grants – to date over 1,500 grants in excess of £17M have been awarded to support local businesses and a re-designed web landing area has seen comprehensive and co-ordinated support and advice for businesses.
- The Council's IT service supported over 2,000 staff with the equipment and software to be able to work from home, using technology in new ways to keep in touch with colleagues and with service users. This service also led the rapid in-house development of an application to manage the administration of those within our community who were shielding.

- Six Children's Hubs were quickly established, with volunteer staff from various services to provide emergency childcare for the children of key workers and vulnerable children requiring additional support, extending the vital service over the Easter and summer breaks. Connected Communities youth workers and Arts staff have provided key supports for some children and young people to help keep them engaged.
- The Council's Legal Services Team adapted to new ways of working with temporary enforced closure of the Scottish Courts and Land Registry, whilst ensuring ongoing support to Council services, particularly to Children's Services in respect of Child Protection Orders.

MAKE THINGS HAPPEN - We plan and deliver our work effectively, making sure we understand needs and priorities.

- The Amenity Service's burial team continued to operate full time and have supported bereaved families on the government restrictions of the number of mourners that can be present at gravesides.
- Our school staff have been working hard to facilitate remote learning – and we've seen a number of positive technological approaches being adopted, including use of Google Classroom. Together with IT, work is well underway supporting the deployment of dedicated computing devices to more than 1400 pupils that can be used in school and at home.
- Some staff who could not do their normal job as their service was 'mothballed' were redeployed into different roles to support the effort to deliver critical and new services such as the Children's Hubs, support for Shielded People and the assessment and approval of Business Grant applications.
- To make sure that our Council suppliers did not suffer in cash flow terms from the unintended consequence of disruption to Council staffing levels caused by lockdown, shielding and isolation requirements, new paperless payment processes were quickly developed and implemented by the Creditor's Team and supported by Internal Audit. To further protect our critical supply chain, arrangements were also quickly established by Procurement, Finance and relevant services to administer and support a scheme of supplier hardship relief: although applied broadly, some of the initial sectors provided with assistance included Social Care Providers, Early Learning Partner Providers, local transport operators and the construction sector.
- We set up a system and special team of staff from various services including the Contact Centre, Museums and Libraries to contact over 3,400 Shielded People to ensure they receive the support they needed to self-isolate, including arranging grocery and prescriptions deliveries to their homes.

CUSTOMER FOCUSED - We put our customers at the heart of everything we do.

- A COVID-19 Helpline was set up to provide a dedicated number for people requiring our support/ referral to community resilience groups.
 - Staff from various services supported local resilience efforts, delivering public donations to the local Foodbank as well as assisting with the delivery of essential groceries and prescriptions to people who had to self-isolate.
 - The Council's dedicated COVID-19 webpages provided key information, daily updates, guidance and advice about the pandemic and how the council adapted its services to continue to provide the critical and emergency services that people rely on.
- 3.14 From these examples of how services have risen to the challenge of 'doing things differently', lessons learned have been captured. These lessons will be used to inform the onward delivery of the Council Plan and the East Lothian Partnership Plan as we seek to capture the innovation and agility that has enabled us to respond quickly and effectively to the COVID-19 pressures we have faced.
- 3.15 Throughout the COVID-19 Response phase, the performance of all councils has been closely monitored by the Scottish Government, COSLA and SOLACE. Appendix 3 contains a summary of the COVID-19 related performance data provided by the Council which highlights the scope and scale of the COVID-19 response in East Lothian.

COVID-19 Response - Financial Implications

- 3.16 Our COVID-19 Response phase has come at a significant cost to the public purse and has been highlighted in COVID-19 Financial Update reports to the Members' Library Service in both May and July 2020. Both of these reports set out the significant financial impact facing the Council in this year arising from COVID-19 and the financial implications facing the Council as we continue to support both on-going response and take preliminary steps towards recovery of vital public services. Whilst an extensive proportion of Scottish Government funding has been deployed through local government to facilitate the Council and partnership response, the financial costs and pressures incurred to date along with those deemed necessary in future are significantly in excess of the additional funding currently being made available and are not containable within approved budget levels.
- 3.17 The most recent report submitted in July 2020 set out an estimated financial cost in 2020-21 of around £15 million (excluding application of any potential flexibilities). A more in-depth review has now been undertaken as part of the 2020/21 Quarter 1 financial review, with current

cost pressures estimated to be around £17 million, and once adjusted to reflect both confirmed and estimated Scottish Government funding, as well as applying all permitted 'flexibilities', the result is a potential net overspend for the Council of around £7.5 million. The most significant variation from the previously reported position reflects significantly revised estimates relating to school transport in line with updated national guidance as well as the full application of all available 'flexibilities', most notably within existing 1140 hours funding streams. There is a very real possibility that further financial impacts will occur as we continue on the road to recovery. The cumulative funding pressures now facing the Council are significant and very challenging, and without additional funding interventions from central governments, there is an increasing risk of adverse impact upon the delivery of local services going forward.

- 3.18 Officers have continued to feed directly into the national discussions between COSLA and Scottish Government in order to help inform national decision-making, and to ensure that full funding is provided to support the Council's response to COVID-19. In accordance with the decision taken at the Special Education Committee on 25 June, the Education Convener sent a letter to the Depute First Minister seeking reassurance that all aspects of Education Recovery would be fully funded although at the time of writing, no response had been received.

COVID-19 – Ongoing Response

- 3.19 Whilst still in the Response Phase of our Emergency Planning framework, services continue to plan for the longer term implications of COVID-19 for East Lothian. It is recognised that the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 will be key drivers for our future work, with increased levels of unemployment and poverty expected.

The impacts of COVID-19 on our communities and residents has already had significant adverse impact:

- Job numbers have reduced and benefits claims have increased
- Children's education has been impacted and for the most vulnerable children this has the potential to increase inequality in attainment and achievement
- Personal debt will have increased, people's mental health has been affected as has people's capacity to cope and manage independently of services
- Social impacts are becoming known e.g. loneliness and isolation, domestic violence etc., and we should anticipate more will emerge and evolve over the coming months.

- 3.20 Comprehensive impact assessment work is being undertaken, with new East Lothian data being gathered and metrics established. The East Lothian Partnership's 'East Lothian Profile' strategic needs assessment undertaken in 2017, will be updated. Continued engagement and consultation across all of our partners and key stakeholders will be essential to understanding and proposing new interventions on local

outcomes and any adjusted focus or altered direction necessary to meet the COVID-19 related challenges ahead. All of this will inform our preparedness for Recovery and Renewal across the county, and will inform base line measures for the future objectives in the planned review of the Council Plan and East Lothian Plan priorities and resource allocation.

- 3.21 Despite everyone's best efforts, localised COVID-19 outbreaks are now being reported across the country. At the time of writing, Aberdeen City and Grampian Health Board's experience of a localised cluster of positive COVID-19 cases indicates the fragility of the relaxations of lockdown and the implications on local communities should a 'spike' occur. It is not unreasonable to expect that a cluster of positive cases might occur in East Lothian. **It is essential that we continue to encourage our community and visitors to the area to continue to follow all public health advice intent on reducing the spread of the virus.** The coronavirus has not gone away – it has merely been 'managed' through our collective co-operation with lockdown measures keeping our incidence rates low. In July 2020, the Scottish Government put in place the 'Coronavirus 19 – Surveillance and Response Framework'. This embeds the COVID-19 Test and Protect arrangements now so familiar to all. The framework depicts the ongoing vital national surveillance and analysis of the incidence of the virus and outlines the arrangements to be followed should a local outbreak occur, and lays out the lead role of NHS Health Boards in directing the local response to a cluster outbreak. In NHS Lothian, the Public Health Directorate carry this lead responsibility and co-ordinate localised multi-agency, including Council services, response through the Chief Officer of the IJB. On 7 August 2020, the Scottish Government published 'The Scottish COVID-19 Workbook 2020'; this document brings into one place advice on how local and national public health agencies will provide support that helps to put in place the action needed to prevent virus spread, together with advice on outbreak management.
- 3.22 As we adapt to living with COVID-19 and progress through the four phases of 'Scotland's Routemap Through and Out of the Crisis' and experience ongoing relaxation of lockdown, we also need to be prepared for post-COVID service delivery. With the known annual impact of winter colds and flus across our community and staff groups, were this to be compounded with an increased incidence of positive COVID-19 cases, the ongoing emergency response to COVID-19 would be significantly adversely impacted e.g. reduced workforce capacity across services. Work is already underway to scope and model our response in such circumstances.
- 3.23 Council priorities continue to focus on meeting the two overarching strategic themes of reducing poverty and inequality and meeting our commitment to tackling the Climate Change crisis. We will also be compelled to consider other significant external influences presenting through this timeline including BREXIT and a deep economic recession with unprecedented fiscal challenges. The UK Government has already commenced a Comprehensive Public Spending Review that will provide updated public spending figures for Revenue spending (3 years) through

until 2023/24 and for Capital spending (4 years) through until 2024/25. These factors generate a significant catalyst for transformational change in the delivery of public services and life in the county.

- 3.24 The Council's programme of transformation will underpin future service delivery; embedding new ways of working across all services; delivering digital services based on our online customer platform; a re-appraisal of our assets; and, will support service re-design to ensure services are customer focused, fit for purpose and efficient and effective.
- 3.25 As we recover from COVID-19 and set about renewing the Council, our economy and our communities, we will grasp the opportunity, not to revert back to the way we were, but to move on to a new, positive future, as set out in the East Lothian vision:

"An even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian, with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish"

COVID-19 - Recovery and Renewal Framework

- 3.26 Only a week or so into the Council's management of the response to COVID-19 and very much in accordance with statutory guidance and good practice, the Chief Executive appointed the Head of Council Resources, assisted by the Head of Development, to act as Bronze Command and lead on the Council's preparedness for Recovery.
- 3.27 At the time of writing, the East Lothian Recovery and Renewal Co-ordination Group has met on 16 occasions since its first meeting on 3 April. Initially this was an internal Council group only but since 10 June, this has also been operating monthly on a formal multi-agency basis.
- 3.28 Early work was influenced by relevant civil contingencies statutory provisions including the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and good practice promoted within the Scottish Government publication 'Preparing Scotland – Recovering from Emergencies in Scotland', a critical guiding light. In accordance with these provisions, it is the Local Authority that is responsible for leading upon the recovery phase.
- 3.29 An initial Terms of Reference (ToR) for the East Lothian Recovery and Renewal Coordination Group (RRCG) was prepared and approved. This includes details of the group's purpose, composition, arrangements for stand-up and stand-down and signalled the need to develop a supporting framework that will help guide and co-ordinate recovery and renewal activity across the county for the foreseeable future. Both the ToR and especially the RRCG Framework were designed to be flexible and responsive and it was always anticipated that they would change to best suit the circumstances prevailing at any given time. Revisions made and reflected within version updates have been reported into the Members Library Service.

3.30 The RRCG Framework includes a set of strategic aims and objectives, a list of 'Action Cards' for the 5 key areas of the community and business in East Lothian that have been most affected by COVID 19. This list is also considered dynamic such that it may evolve with supporting sub-structures as circumstances dictate. Each Key Area is led by a member of the Council Management Team and where possible, calls have been made upon established support groups and mechanisms already in place. The key activity areas are as follows:

- **Economy – Lead Officer Douglas Proudfoot**, Head of Development, supported by the Connected Economies Group
- **Communities – Lead Officer Sharon Saunders**, Head of Communities & Partnerships
- **Health & Social Care – Lead Officer Iain Gorman**, Head of Operations, East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
- **Education & Children's Services – Lead Officer Lesley Brown**, Acting Head of Education
- **Environment & Infrastructure – Lead Officer Tom Reid**, Head of Infrastructure

These key activity areas have been supplemented by three distinct support groups covering Communications (led by the Corporate Communications Manager), Equalities (led by the Service Manager Corporate Policy & Improvement) and Council Resources (led by the Chief Operating Officer Finance).

3.31 There has been substantial work undertaken by all of the key activity areas albeit that the extent to which each has been involved with response, amended response and recovery modes has varied. It is no surprise that with a more intensive and prolonged response phase, the Health and Social Care and Community workstreams are on a relative basis, at a much earlier stage of the recovery and renewal process.

3.32 **Economy** – the Connected Economies Group (CEG) which reports to the East Lothian Partnership met on 15 May and agreed that its focus would be re-purposed in the light of the emergency to support the preparedness for / delivery of the Recovery and Renewal of the East Lothian Economy from a multi-agency and partnering perspective. The CEG has participative and active membership from across a wide range of Council Services as well as from Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the DWP, Federation for Small Business (FSB), East & Mid Lothian Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise and Edinburgh College. An invitation was also taken up by VisitScotland to join the group. The CEG established a structure of sub-groups covering Town Centres, Tourism & Hospitality, Rural and Employability. The CEG has met fortnightly since 15 May and sub groups have generally met on a weekly basis, moving to a fortnightly frequency from the beginning of August.

The CEG has established and updated its action card, established an initial impact assessment, and has overseen key milestones during release of lockdown restrictions and re-start activity including 29 June which saw the re-opening of local centres and retail activity, 6 July which saw external hospitality opening up and 15 July which witnessed the re-opening of the wider tourism & hospitality sector with control measures in place.

Key support interventions and outcomes have been administered and delivered including financial support interventions (business support grants, rent deferments, additional support and flexibility for those struggling to pay business and hardship funds), single points of contact for towns & surrounding villages, re-opening advice, and clear single web-based landing point for the numerous business support enquiries. Partners have prioritised Universal Credit benefit applications, helped align and signpost businesses to wider national financial support schemes, lobbied for further interventions or to draw attention to gaps in support criteria and held a number of Webinars.

A communications plan for the Economy Key Area has been developed and campaigns devised including the launch of our “Stay Safe, Support Local and Love East Lothian” campaign. Posters have been provided to local businesses alongside social media and press activity. Our partners have also launched aligned digital campaigns, e.g. VisitScotland and Scotland Golf Coast.

Substantial work remains for significant duration in respect of Recovery & Renewal for the Economy Key Area. It is hoped though that some of the supporting infrastructure that is either already in place and being strengthened or being formed through this adversity can continue to grow and play a key role in supporting our longer term economic recovery.

- 3.33 **Communities** – Due to the intensive and ongoing community response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the multi-agency Community Recovery and Renewal Co-Ordinating Group first met on 15 July 2020. A Terms of Reference for the Group is currently in consideration by Group members and will be approved at the second meeting on 19 August 2020. The Group comprises representation from key Council services, such as Connected Communities, Sports Development & Community Recreation and Housing, and community leaders and partners from Area Partnerships, the Association of East Lothian Community Councils, Volunteer Centre East Lothian, East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel, East Lothian Advice Consortium, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Business Community et al.

The Group is considering community recovery and renewal planning within 5 workstream themes overarched by the intent to reduce inequalities within and across the county:

- **Public Health:** including poverty (financial, food, fuel, digital), mental wellbeing, resilience.

- **Living Well – All Life Stages:** including physical activity, outdoor space, culture, social isolation, befriending.
- **Family Life:** including family learning, domestic violence, resilience, housing.
- **Young People – East Lothian’s Future:** including youth activity, resilience, employment, attainment/awards, citizenship.
- **Community Life:** including community kindness, volunteering, pride in place, inclusion and diversity.

The Group is also developing its approach to community engagement, utilising as many existing engagement networks as possible, to inform identification of county-wide and local needs and priorities arising from the impacts of COVID-19 across the county.

As required by the Recovery and Renewal Framework, the Group’s initial work will focus on production of their Community Action Card and Community Impact Assessment and will call upon pre-existing partnership groups e.g. The Poverty Working Group, The Children’s Strategic Partnership, The Community Justice Partnership, Area Partnerships, The Active Schools Network etc., to accept responsibility for community recovery and renewal actions identified.

- 3.34 **Health & Social Care** – The restrictions have had considerable impacts on the delivery of all Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) services for the last 5 months. Managers and clinical staff have developed innovative approaches to maintain key services for patients and to sustain supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) across all clinical settings. The actions taken by the HSCP services and the likely long term plans have been discussed at length with the Integrated Joint Board (IJB). The detail of this is available on the IJB website. The operational renewal and/or recovery of HSCP services will be progressed within the management structures of the HSCP while the strategic implications of recovery during COVID-19 will be developed through the existing change board structure of the IJB. However, it is important to note that the HSCP will have to work closely with partner organisations in the public, third and independent sectors. The HSCP is also working, under instruction from Scottish Government, to support care home providers with sustainability payments which are currently available for application until September 2020.

It is likely that service delivery restrictions will continue for some time. As noted elsewhere, the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 have significant implications for the delivery of the HSCP’s services with some services planning recovery timescales in years rather than weeks. Changes will also be required to NHS Lothian’s outpatient, diagnostic, surgical and treatment services which East Lothian residents access. This is likely to include increased waits for diagnostics tests and treatments and we will continue to work with NHS and government colleagues on the prioritisation of remobilisation of key services. It is important to note that

enforced changes to services have allowed for exploration of different ways of working, including increased utilisation of video and other technologies in patient assessment, care and for service management. We are keen to learn from the positive developments e.g. the launch of a new mental health helpline, and integrate them into service recovery.

- 3.35 **Education & Children's Services** – Recovery of education and children's services has been underpinned by the Scottish Government's COVID-19 Education Recovery Group which has set the parameters within which local authorities have been expected to operate. Education and Children's Services have been firmly focussed on supporting the needs of our children, young people and families, recognising that the impact of the pandemic is likely to have been significant for some and that support will be required well in to the future. Up until 23 June 2020, plans were being developed that schools would partially reopen for pupils and that the approach would be one of 'blended learning'. However, on 23 June, the Scottish Government announced that the new planning assumption would be that all children and young people would return to school full-time at the start of the new school session. The Education and Children's Services Steering group was realigned in May as the Recovery Group and has met regularly since then. Guidance for schools has been developed by key staff from across Council services, in collaboration with the Trade Unions. At the request of Scottish Government, a Local Delivery Phasing Plan was developed that set out the steps that would be taken to reopen schools. This plan was conditionally approved by the Education Committee on 25 June 2020.

Whilst there has been an understandable focus on reopening school buildings in August, work has also been taken forward to consider how we can learn the lessons from the creative approaches taken to support young people during COVID-19 and how we can build on the successes of our teams delivering services around the needs of the young person. Our focus will remain on developing our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on our children and families and putting in place support that enables them to succeed and achieve.

- 3.36 **Infrastructure and Environment** – The key area of Infrastructure and Environment recovery and renewal has produced substantial challenges in maintaining essential service provision around waste and recycling services, emergency road services, burial and amenity, transportation and facilities management services.

The demand has increased through the release of lockdown restrictions and the resumption of public services, particularly as people have returned to enjoying East Lothian's open spaces. The Scottish Government Spaces for People initiative, which had seen 3000 responses to the recent public engagement exercise continues to develop through further localised engagement and consultation with stakeholders, with progress being made across a number of towns in terms of physical distancing, speed limit changes and active travel interventions.

Within the early recovery of Waste Services new safe working practices were developed that enabled core services such as mixed waste, food and kerbside recycling to be seamlessly maintained. The team worked without break over a three-week period to enable a temporary garden waste collection service to clear the backlog and a new temporary monthly service has been activated to support the demand from our communities.

Transportation ensured a co-ordinated public transport network was maintained and that logistics support was provided across the hubs and food delivery work. They have equally been instrumental in designing a solution around the home to school transport requirement as schools return.

In respect of open space management and access to our coast and parks reflecting the Scottish Government Route Map to recovery a multi-agency approach was taken that consisted of Infrastructure teams working collaboratively with colleagues across Communications, Safer Communities, Risk Management and with external partners in Police Scotland to ensure access was provided safely for our residents to exercise and to then manage the demand as visitors returned. Safety and infection risk control was the focus and this work was recognised nationally for its success.

Sport, Leisure and Countryside Management maintained burial provision throughout, handled essential street cleaning and parks maintenance, and the Ranger Service led the frontline operation of open space management. They worked closely with Roads and Environmental Health to set up a Mass Fatality Facility and plan that created a resource and capacity which thus far has not been required.

Facilities Management Services redistributed their resource to support the daily and weekly changes produced by COVID19 which enabled child care hubs to open, food parcels to be constructed and delivered and planned and reactionary cleaning regimes installed to protect staff and customers. This team's focus is now firmly on the reopening of the school estate and the increased cleaning demand that is required.

Engineering have been pivotal in managing the close down of assets and then their phased recommissioning, in particular schools, offices and toilets. Their work alongside the Strategic Asset and Capital Plan Management team has developed with a focus toward contract management to ensure capital works and asset maintenance is restarted at the earliest opportunity.

Substantial focus is being given to Climate Change in the consideration of how to bring back services and work continues within the Strategic Asset and Capital Plan team to look at asset management and office utilisation drawing benefit from the opportunity presented around virtual, smart and remote working.

Joint working across Protective Services, particularly Environmental Health Service, and Economic Development, continues to support the safe operation of the business, tourism and hospitality sectors in compliance with Scottish Government Guidelines for public health management and reducing the spread of the coronavirus. Infrastructure and Environment continues to work to sustain the full range of frontline service provision and support for stakeholders and to protect and ensure the safety of our staff, residents and visitors in the face of COVID19 which includes the risk from localised infection spikes and a second wave.

Moving Forward: Transitioning to Recovery & Renewal, Business Continuity and Emergency Recess Arrangements

- 3.37 The COVID-19 pandemic is very different from many of the Civil Emergencies that have been experienced, planned for and rehearsed. This is particularly the case in the context of duration, re-occurrence and extent of impact. The transitioning between Response to Recovery & Renewal is also therefore very different and must also be dynamic.
- 3.38 The Scottish Government has signalled that the Routemap and release of lockdown measures will continue through the coming months. In announcing the go-ahead to re-open schools and the ending of shielding, the First Minister also set out that Scotland could remain in Phase Three of the Routemap out of lockdown for some time to come. The virus remains highly infectious and very dangerous.
- 3.39 Whilst Emergency Planning arrangements would envisage a clean end to a response phase and the initiation of a recovery phase, this emergency is very different and as a result requires a different, more agile and sophisticated approach focussed on health & safety and specifically, public health. Whilst normally aligned in terms of timeline it is clear that decisions around governance, business continuity arrangements and formally declaring a Recovery phase although proximate are very much separate and can and should be detached from one another in this case.
- 3.40 Recovery and Renewal will continue for a long time and will inform the reshaping of Council priorities, resource allocations and services in the years ahead. It is clear that a consequence of responding to COVID-19, that the collective resource implications associated with response and recovery are significant and often recurring. Of critical importance, the Council and statutory and Third Sector partners must stand ready to revert to 'response mode' should there be any significant 'spike' or 'cluster' of COVID-19 cases within East Lothian, or neighbouring authorities. The normal winter cold and flu pressures experienced by key services, e.g. health, social care and education services etc., and the resulting impacts on staffing levels, if compounded by a local COVID-19 'spike', would result in services refocussing their resources onto 'response' priorities, potentially bringing delay to the recovery and renewal plans in progress. This remains the reality of our operating context until such times as there is a vaccine for the coronavirus, or levels of immunity across our community increase significantly.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications associated with the report recommendations, although it is anticipated that response and especially recovery and renewal activity may result in significant future policy alterations for both the Council and other stakeholders. Any such policy implications will be subject to the appropriate governance and approval arrangements of each organisation.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The specific recommendations made within this report do not directly affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

Recovery and Renewal Plans developed will however be subject to Integrated Impact Assessments.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – The financial implications for the Council are set out in more detail in paragraph 3.16 of this report. A more detailed review on the financial implications facing the Council has been undertaken in the context of the 2020/12 Financial Year and the Quarter 1 report being considered at Council today. This will set the context for any decisions required to manage the financial commitments for the Council in both the short and medium term, including where appropriate any modification to the Council's approved financial strategy.
- 6.2 The financial implications facing the Council arising as a result of COVID-19 are significant both in the current financial year, and are likely to have implications for approved financial plans going forward. Given the potential scale of the financial pressures, it remains clear that unless the position changes dramatically with regard to the level of national government funding being made available to cover the costs of the council's response to this national public health crisis, the Council faces a financial challenge on an unprecedented scale and tough choices will be necessary in order to balance budgets. This is of increased concern should there be a local COVID-19 'spike' and cluster of cases in East Lothian, resulting in a need for localised response and additional COVID-19 expenditure for which it is not yet clear what level of Scottish Government funding would apply to enable that response.
- 6.3 Personnel – Council staff in essential direct service delivery services and roles e.g. Social Care, Connected Communities, Customer Services, Waste service et al., continued to deliver direct business critical services across the community throughout the emergency response to COVID-19.

To enable staff to deliver essential front line services, working practices changed quickly supported by centralisation and supply of essential PPE.

Other services responded to COVID-19 with an immediate and necessary shift toward homeworking for many staff, particularly those who were office and school based, and staff responded quickly, positively and effectively to this significant change. With the return of schools this month there remain approximately one thousand members of staff who are still working from home and who are likely to do so for some time.

This is a considerable change as to how we work as a Council and many HR policies are currently under review to reflect this. Managers have been flexible in accommodating changes to the working patterns and hours of staff to accommodate childcare arrangements to support homeworking. The adjustment to working from home was embraced by most and the Healthy Working Lives Team has been proactive in providing support to those struggling to cope with the change from the office environment. Paid special leave was granted to those who could not work from home but who had childcare or other caring responsibilities. Casual workers and supply teachers received compensatory payments in accordance with Government Guidance.

- 6.4 Other – Positive and collaborative working relationships with community planning partners e.g. Police Scotland, Volunteer Centre East Lothian et al, has ensured effective cross-agency co-operation and deployment of resources to meet the COVID-19 challenges experience across East Lothian.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 COVID – 19 – Financial Management Update – Report by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People) Members Library Service dated 16/05/2020. https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16539/members_library_service
- 7.2 COVID-19 – East Lothian Recovery & Renewal – Report by the Head of Council Resources to the East Lothian Council Members Library Service 01/05/2020. https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16540/members_library_service
- 7.3 COVID-19 – Financial Update – Report by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) to the East Lothian Council Members Library Service dated 02/07/2020. https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16541/members_library_service
- 7.4 East Lothian Council COVID 19 Recovery and Renewal Framework Document, Version 1.1 – Report by Head of Council Resources to the Members Library Service dated 5 August 2020

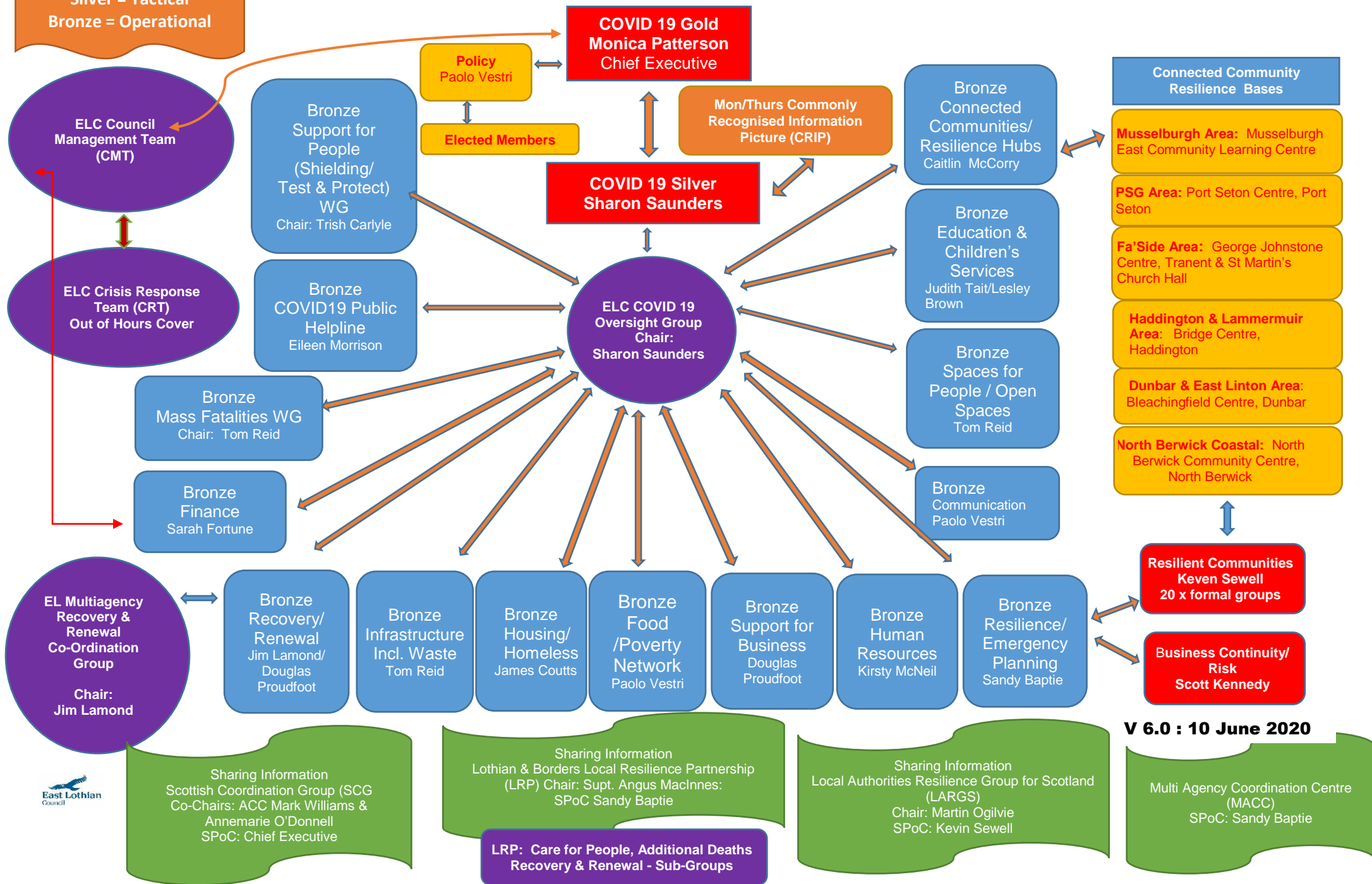
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16685/members_library_service

- 7.5 Corporate Risk Register – COVID-19 Risk - Item 9, Appendix 2 – Report by the Chief Executive to the Audit & Governance Committee dated 16 June 2020
- 7.6 Appendix 1 East Lothian Council COVID-19 Command & Response Structure
- 7.7 Appendix 2 East Lothian Shielding Population – Customer Feedback
- 7.8 Appendix 3 East Lothian Council’s COVID-19 Performance Overview

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East Lothian Council COVID 19 Command and Response Structure

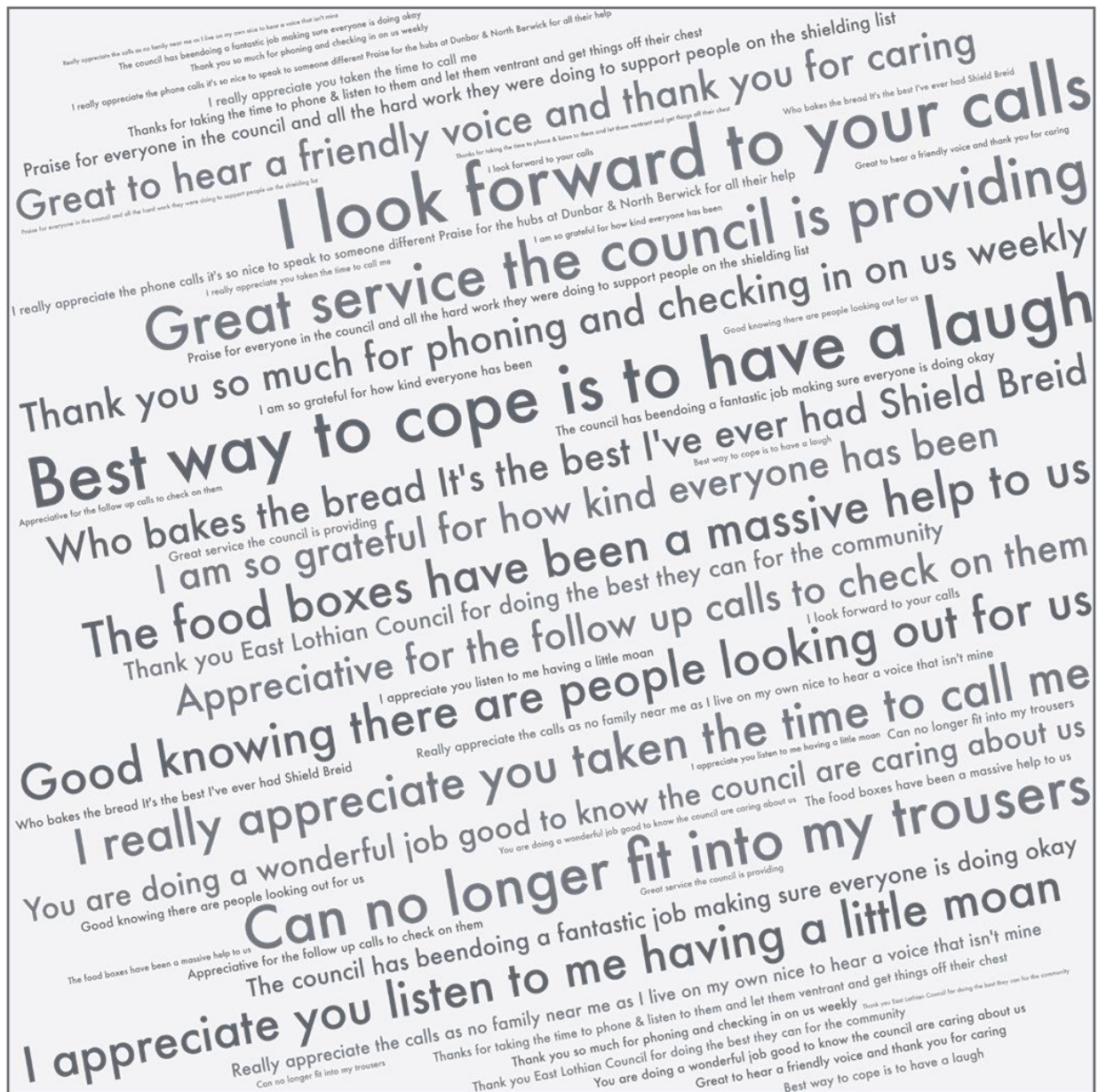
Gold = Strategic
 Silver = Tactical
 Bronze = Operational



V 6.0 : 10 June 2020



Appendix 2: Comments from Shielded People



Appendix 3: East Lothian Council's COVID-19 Performance Overview (summary of weekly COVID-19 Data Dashboard return made to COSLA)

	1 May	29 May	26 June	24 July
Total number of individuals on shielding list in contact with ELS	1885	2997	3429	3444
Total number of individuals calling helpline	100	2329	2970	3333
Number of teaching staff physically working in schools/hubs today	47	68	238	31
Total number of children who physically attended today (excluding those that only attended for a free school meal)	207	286	418	71
Total number of children and young people for whom free school meals/ lunch packs have been provided for in school or at home	n/a	1193	1381	1151
Numbers of Corona virus Business Support Fund grant applications	1021	1420	1576	1716
Number of Corona virus Business Support Fund grants awarded	997	1283	1432	1562
Total value of Corona virus Business Support Fund grants made	£11.725m	£14,537m	£16.139m	£17.524m
Total - Number of Homeless applications received in the month	46	41	38	52
Current tenant arrears - end of period	£1,289,977	£1,467,062	£1,575,490	£1,460,445
Total - all categories delayed discharges	6	1	0	0
Number of Adult at Risk / Adult Protection Referrals over the last week	n/a	18	23	24
How many children (including unborn babies) were added to the child protection register in the last week?	0	2	1	1
How many children with child protection plans were seen face to face by a professional (education/health/social work) in the last two weeks?	39	44	38	37