



Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
14 October 2021

ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

Key Decision: No

Ward(s) Affected: All

**Covid-19 response - Economic recovery, support for the vulnerable and health and wellbeing review**

**Report by the Director for the Economy**

**Executive Summary**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To update Members of the Committee of the support provided to our communities and businesses throughout the pandemic, notably from April 2020 to September 2021.

1.2 To provide an overview of how the local economy in Adur and Worthing is 'bouncing back' from the pandemic, and highlight the ongoing areas of work which are supporting our most vulnerable residents and businesses.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That JOSOC notes the overview of progress in delivering the interventions and activities to support our businesses and communities as a result of the pandemic.

### **3. Context**

3.1 Adur & Worthing Councils were tasked by the central government to run a series of interventions in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This report provides an outline to those immediate actions taken by the Councils' when the pandemic was first declared in March 2020, through to the current day as the Councils' continue to support and enable our communities and businesses. The Joint Strategic Committee Papers of [Covid 19 Response \(July 2020\)](#) and ["And Then" bouncing back in post pandemic Adur and Worthing \(July 2020\)](#) provide a good overview of the progress made in the last 18 months.

3.2 The immediate response was delivered in the context of the unknown; unknown into the extent of the virus, unknown in how the virus would be contained and unknown in how people, businesses and communities would react to the daily calls from central government. The Councils' Officers and Members reacted and adapted very quickly and pivoted a number of activities and resources in order to support our places. This included the need to redeploy staff to the areas of the Councils' where need was most. A number of those areas are contained in this paper and the majority of those working groups have continued into the recovery phase.

#### **Community Response**

3.3 The Councils' Community Response was instigated at the outset of the Covid Pandemic in March 2020 to ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities were not left behind and struggling without access to food and housing.

3.4 The immediate emergency response began in March 2020 during the first lock down until June 2020, with the majority of the Council's staff and some of its partners forming the Community Response Team who worked alongside our Housing Team, our local partners and groups that were establishing themselves to support communities. A briefing was shared at that time which can be viewed [here](#).

3.5 The Councils' work broadly focused on providing help and support with some of the basics needed by people and families, including: food, medicines, someone to talk to, prescriptions, mental health, safety advice and help with digital access. Efforts were focused on establishing a digital platform to enable communities to ask for help and for efforts to support them to be managed and communicated between the teams and with volunteers. Officers

also worked with WSCC and local groups to ensure that communications with local residents were also provided in written form and especially targeted to those in need.

3.6 Alongside this an emergency food depot was established to provide space for bulk buying of food and providing food parcels directly to people's homes. Hundreds of local volunteers were onboarded to help with the delivery of food, medicines and providing food parcels to people in need of emergency food parcels. The team also worked closely with WSCC who held primary responsibility for the "clinically vulnerable," and with other key partner agencies and especially local food and mutual aid groups.

3.7 As the pandemic has evolved, its ongoing impacts on the most vulnerable members of the community have been and continue to be well documented in national data and research. These include the most immediate effects and the emerging ongoing social and economic impacts, which began with predominantly older people, or those with underlying health conditions, for people from minoritised ethnic communities, carers and disabled groups, and young people etc. We have seen the profound impact and indeed the ongoing effects on young people and their education and their mental health alongside the impact of mental health and wellbeing for many of our communities. Alongside this however we also witnessed the huge capacity for kindness and community, through the efforts of our local communities and our workforce that stepped up to help and enable others during this crisis.

### **Business Response**

3.8 The immediate response to supporting businesses focused on an extensive distribution of Covid-19 Business Grants and Business Rates relief (see 3.11 and 3.12). The business grants focused on providing support to all eligible business rates payers during the initial lockdown. Following the announcement of these funds in March 2020 the Councils' were tasked to develop a grant distribution system in order to provide grants of £10,000 and £25,000 to all eligible businesses across Adur and Worthing ([reported to JSC in June 2020](#)). The Councils created, tested and delivered this system within 3 weeks of the government announcement with the first grants issued on 3rd April 2020. A cross-departmental team was brought together to deliver the new service, including officers from Place & Economy, Digital, Technical Services, Major Projects & Investment and Finance.

3.9 During the pandemic, from April 2020 to August 2021, the Councils' processed over 8,000 applications and distributed in excess of £60m to

businesses across Adur & Worthing. These funds were critical to keep businesses active and the local economy resilient. The grants distributed were varied over the course of the pandemic, based on the needs of each lockdown. The team had to adapt to and deliver over 10 grant streams over the period, examples include:

- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant
- Local Restrictions Support Grant
- Christmas Support Grant
- Restart Grant
- Additional Restrictions Grant

3.10 Prior to the pandemic, eligible Business Rates bills were due to be reduced from 1 April 2020 by awards of Expanded Retail Relief at 50% including live music venues and cinemas, in all cases restricted to properties with a Rateable Value below £51,000. However, as part of the response to the pandemic the government increased the rate of relief to 100%, removed the Rateable Value threshold and extended the criteria to include properties being used for assembly, leisure, hotels/guest accommodation and those used for the provision of sport. Those industries and businesses most affected by the pandemic.

3.11 Expanded Retail Relief was extended from 1 April 2021 at 100%, but was subsequently reduced to 66% from 1 July 2021. Additionally, from 1 July 2021 two “cash caps” were introduced depending on whether the business was required to be closed from 5 January 2021.

3.12 The Councils successfully issued revised Business Rates bills applying these changes, and are now working flexibly with ratepayers with a view to creating sustainable payment arrangements balanced with the need to secure vital income to the Councils. Total awards of relief since 1 April 2020 exceed £12.5M in Adur and £24M in Worthing.

## **4. Supporting through the pandemic**

### **Communities**

4.1 The Councils have focused on five priorities in its response to the pandemic:

- Food security

- Financial support
- Housing and homelessness
- Employment
- Mental health and wellbeing

4.2 These priorities shaped how the Councils secured and managed the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) ([reported to JSC in June 2021](#)). Adur and Worthing received over £859,000 to deliver a programme of activities designed to help vulnerable people respond to the impacts of Covid-19 and support the public health approach to this pandemic. This is also forming the basis of the development of some key strategies such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

#### **4.3 Food Security**

In response to the issues of food security during the first phase of the pandemic the Councils organised the bulk purchasing of food and provided and secured funding for several of the food groups.

4.4 From June 2020, the emergency food depot was closed, and Councils' efforts shifted towards working to support local food groups. Community Works, the Councils' commissioned infrastructure partner, was asked to play a key role in supporting local food groups and mutual aid partners with their food and support efforts. This work has been evolving over the last 18 months into what is now the Adur and Worthing Food Partnership, providing important infrastructure support and enablement for the food groups in Adur and Worthing.

4.5 The communities response to the issue of food insecurity in Adur and Worthing was enormous, with a network of mutual aid groups forming in local communities across the Councils. Thousands of meals were delivered or provided to local residents, vulnerable people were connected by food groups into the wider support around the drivers of food need (finance / debt, losing work / furlough, mental health, housing etc) and the network built solid relationships with large scale food suppliers to ensure adequate food donations.

#### **4.6 Financial Support**

The Councils have been working since March 2021 to explore how to identify, target and support low income households in Adur & Worthing. The Proactive multi- disciplinary team developed and tested a five-step pathway that aims to build greater resilience across our communities and to mitigate, through the

proactive use of data, the impact of the pandemic on our more financially vulnerable residents.

4.7 This work continues to develop a preventative and early intervention approach that supports residents to avoid spiralling into further debt and supports them with the wellbeing and mental health challenges associated with financial and social hardship, including the work of our Money Mentors, the work of Citizens Advice and other organisations and groups.. Full details of the work completed to date, and the plans to scale it up, can be read in the Director for Communities' [Report to the Joint Strategic Committee dated 13 July 2021](#).

4.8 The Councils' financial support service managed to meet the growing demand throughout the whole of the pandemic. With the increased demand generated by the Proactive calls to vulnerable residents, OneStop financial advisors hours were increased and a full time additional post was recruited, in addition to funding from COMF to support and enable some of our wider groups.

4.9 Additionally, the Revenues & Benefits Service has awarded discretionary Council Tax Support of up to £150 to working age customers which amounted to:

- Adur: 2020/21 = £177k and 2021/22 = £124k
- Worthing: 2020/21 = £655k and 2021/22 = £570k

In 2020/21 this was funded from the Hardship Grant that each Council received. In 2021/22 the additional awards are part funded by the Councils from the Council Tax Support Grant and from a contribution from the County Council.

4.10 The Councils' also administered [Test & Trace Support Payments](#) of £500 for self-isolating residents (and parents/guardians of children who are self-isolating from school or nursery) who suffer a reduction in their earnings. Since September 2020 more than 3,300 applications have been considered and payments of almost £400k issued.

#### 4.11 ***Housing and Homelessness***

As part of our 'Everyone In' and winter provision, 27 Adur residents were housed and 144 Worthing residents, of those we have achieved. Positive move on for 21 of the Adur residents and for 103 Worthing of residents.

4.12 Between March and August we have continued to house rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping and 2 Adur residents remain in temporary housing and 27 Worthing residents. MHCLG provided an uplift in Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding and we bid successfully for Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) funding to support the provision which has included a pilot where we procure accommodation under SLA, once the landlord is reassured the tenancy can be managed, an assured shorthold tenancy is being awarded and the property transferred to Opening Doors.

4.13 MHCLG released two further funds to support move on housing and support for those at risk of rough sleeping - Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and Accommodation For Ex Offenders (AFEO). As registered social landlord, Adur was able to bid and was awarded capital for two units of accommodation with revenue support for 5 service users. Through AFEO we have been awarded funding to help those released from prison secure private sector accommodation and funding for 3 staff to work with probation, the prisons and CAS3 - the probation accommodation scheme for those not eligible for housing on release under the Homeless Reduction Act.

4.14 The Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding provided outreach with funding for additional staffing to support those in all forms of accommodation and provide weekly inreach support, drop ins as well as outreach work.

4.15 The COMF award has enabled us to provide a variety of work and includes Dual Diagnosis support (for those with mental health and substance misuse), an Emergency Assistance Grant fund has been set up, delivered by Turning Tides to help those in financial hardship and can be accessed by Adur and Worthing residents. This fund will assist with essential items and help those for example experiencing fuel poverty. There is also a fund to assist homeless prevention work so that we can assist those impacted by the pandemic e.g meet their housing costs to prevent eviction.

4.16 Pathway established for RSLs to refer households at risk of eviction so that we can work together to prevent eviction, our buoyant local housing market is impacting this work as rents are increasing.

4.17 WORTH domestic abuse work co-located with the housing team to support those experiencing domestic abuse

4.18 Delivery of new local temporary accommodation has continued and 27 additional units of WBC owned accommodation in Worthing will be in use by the end of October.

#### **4.19 Employment**

In response to the ongoing concerns rising from the pandemic, a deliberate decision was made to form a multi-disciplinary team, primarily between Wellbeing and Economy, to work together on delivering a series of interventions to support the employment and skills agenda. This programme, named Good Work, bridges the gap between the two services. At its heart is a focus on jobs that promote wellbeing, that grow and develop skills and capabilities and provide financial security. Work needs to be good, enjoyable and fulfilling, with employers recognising the importance of retaining staff and creating flexibility for their workforce. Sections 4.16 - 4.18 are some examples of the interventions being delivered under this programme.

4.20 One of the gaps identified was the need for the Councils' to provide some clear guidance for those individuals who were experiencing employment concerns, including redundancy, during the pandemic. Whilst the core delivery of this sits with partner organisations, it was important to establish '[Help to Work](#)' information that provided self-guided help for those in need. This support sits alongside the work of our Employment Support Workers and also the relatively new Youth Work Hub, which was established earlier this year to directly support young people.

4.21 The Councils' were one of the early adopters of the Kickstart Programme. A government-led initiative to support young people directly affected by the pandemic back into work. The Council agreed to be a Kickstart employer, whilst also helping to facilitate placements for other businesses, in Autumn 2020. Since then the Councils have worked in partnership with DWP and other organisations, such as Worthing Homes, to deliver a series of placements. The Councils' have provided over 30 placements for local young people, with wrap-around support provided to give them the best possible chance of securing employment post the initial six month Kickstart period. A further 6 placements have been secured in our partner organisations of West Sussex MIND, ESTEEM and Worthing Homes.

4.22 Further to supporting individuals, the Councils also began to work with key sectors, those severely impacted by the pandemic, to see if assistance could also be provided to those industries. A combination of interventions were delivered with key sectors such as leisure and hospitality, through providing virtual job fairs and, where needed, redundancy support. The

Councils have continued this key sector work and are currently working with a number of healthcare organisations to, where possible, support local recruitment into these key roles.

#### **4.23 *Mental Health and Wellbeing***

The Wellbeing and Going Local Teams focused on the provision of support for communities, especially those that are struggling with their health and wellbeing, connecting them up to receive calls from volunteers or community groups (especially during periods of lockdown where people could not get this connection in any other way), and helping them get online to access as a means of connection with others.

4.24 The COMF funding enabled us to extend our interventions to support young people. This includes twice weekly detached outreach in Worthing but also one to one mentoring for children who are struggling to return to school post lock down. The funding also allowed us to support people who are homeless and vulnerably housed, to enhance their social connection through facilitating access to pro social activities, training and volunteering.

4.25 COMF funding also contributed towards a multi agency project to help prevent suicide. The Councils joined forces with several local organisations including West Sussex MIND, Worthing Samaritans and Olly's Future to deliver a new initiative called Preventing Suicide in Adur and Worthing. Launched on Friday 10 September - World Suicide Prevention Day - the initiative aims to raise awareness of the signs to look for that someone is in crisis, and teach people how to start a conversation that could help save a person's life. This will be delivered through a series of free 'Talking About Suicide' training courses, taking place between September and December, for people who volunteer or work with the public. This includes Councils' Parks and Foreshore teams, taxi drivers, bartenders and food bank volunteers.

4.26 Finally, to support the health and wellbeing of Adur and Worthing residents, a programme of events, 'The Great Outdoors' was run over summer 2021. This aimed to encourage residents to use outdoor spaces, to bring communities together in activities designed for adults and children. This was a great success with over 2,685 people participating in events over 25 days from 21st June to 5th September with an additional 80 people invited to attend some wellbeing (sauna & sea) sessions in Autumn.

#### **4.27 *Volunteering and Mutual Aid***

In response to the Pandemic, Adur and Worthing tasked over 200 volunteers across the nine Council area neighbourhoods. Feedback showed that many

volunteers found the process of engaging with the Councils easy, enjoyed helping and the sense of purpose. Feedback showed that many volunteers found the process of engaging with the Councils easy, enjoyed helping and the sense of purpose and community.

4.28 The pandemic led to a significant increase in the numbers of new mutual aid groups starting up across Adur and Worthing. This community mobilisation was extraordinary and crucial to ensuring that communities coped during the pandemic. During the lockdowns, the groups focused primarily on the provision of food and supporting vulnerable or lonely people and this informal network of voluntary services was invaluable in helping many of Councils' residents worst affected by Covid-19.

## **Businesses**

4.29 To support our businesses and economic base the Councils have been focusing on five core areas of work in response to the pandemic:

- Financial support
- Safe spaces and visitor confidence
- Placemaking
- Business networking
- Delivery of major development and investment projects

### **4.30 *Financial support***

As outlined in 3.8, the Councils delivered a series of covid business grants to support businesses during each of the lockdowns. The initial mandatory funds supported all sectors, and predominantly those businesses that had a rateable value, to assist with such items as overhead costs. As the pandemic continued and further lockdowns ensued, the Councils were also provided with discretionary which allowed more flexibility to target those sectors that weren't receiving the support or those businesses, for example self-employed businesses, that 'slipped through the net'. The covid business grants, through different grant strands, were provided to businesses from April 2020 to August 2021 and were predominantly targeted at those sectors most affected by the pandemic (e.g. retail, hospitality and leisure sectors).

4.31 Further to the covid monies, the Councils also secured further funding from West Sussex County Council to provide small business grants to enable those businesses who were pivoting or diversifying during the pandemic to gain some targeted support to facilitate this change. Whilst some sectors suffered, other businesses have pivoted well which has sustained and, in

some cases, grown their business. The Small Business Growth Grant was delivered in the first six months of 2021 to provide a launch pad for those businesses coming out of the pandemic. A number of grants also went to micro entrepreneurs, therefore these grants also supported start up opportunities. In total the Councils supported 100 businesses across Adur and Worthing.

#### **4.32 *Safe spaces and visitor confidence***

Due to the sectoral makeup, Adur and Worthing's town centres were severely disadvantaged during the pandemic. Not only in the initial lockdown where all high street businesses, excluding those selling essential items, were asked to shut but over the course of the last 18 months. Businesses are still feeling the effects of Covid-19 as consumer confidence still isn't at the same pre-pandemic levels. A series of interventions were delivered to support these businesses as they moved in and out of lockdowns.

4.33 In response to the initial re-opening of the economy in Summer 2020, a number of service areas, including Place & Economy, Licensing, Safer Communities, Wellbeing and Environmental Health came together to share business intelligence in order to provide up to date business support. The Safe Towns Group, which still meets, was the driving force behind advising businesses on the latest government initiatives, supporting consumer confidence and interpreting new legislation that would affect the high street. The Coronavirus (COVID-19): Business Advice page is still live on the Councils' website.

4.34 The Councils also received Reopening High Streets Safely funding around the same time to support the Summer reopening. Due to the need to practice safe distancing in town centres, and in order to allow businesses to create two metre queuing systems and to trade outside (see 4.31), the Councils' installed temporary road closures in Adur and Worthing, new covid markings and signs, whilst also providing marketing campaigns to encourage residents and visitors back into the town centres . These were joint initiatives with our business community. The Councils are currently delivering a series of interventions as part of the Welcome Back funding received from central government to also encourage more people back to our high streets, to include upgrades of street furniture and localised events. Further marketing has followed, including the [Roadmap to Return](#) campaign.

#### **4.35 *Placemaking***

The pandemic encouraged Councils and businesses to work in partnership to deliver a series of place-based changes in order to, amongst other things,

capitalise on the 'Buy Local' theme which has been a positive change as a result of Covid-19 (due to workforce patterns). A number of legislative changes came into effect from the central government during the different lockdown periods, whilst a number of direct interventions, such as the 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme directly supported the hospitality sector to recover after the initial lockdown period. The Councils also experienced an increase in outdoor concession (pop up business) applications as businesses wished to capitalise on the natural environment.

4.36 Changes to trading hours, the ability to trade outside through pavement licences, an allowance for food and beverage businesses to deliver off sales from their premises, new outdoor structures all came into effect during the pandemic and were managed by the Councils. Most of these government interventions supported the notion of outdoor activity rather than indoor activity, allowing businesses to trade where they might not have been able due to national covid restrictions. As with the business grants (in section 3.8) the Councils had to adapt and deliver activity very quickly to ensure businesses had the opportunity to capitalise on the aforementioned initiatives.

4.37 In addition to the interventions in 4.33 and 4.34 the Councils felt it important to continue programmed works to upgrade our places and spaces, especially as more people were enjoying the outdoors. During the pandemic period public realm improvements such as Queensway in Lancing, new decking at Waterwise Play Area on Worthing Promenade and the start of construction of new public realm at Portland Road were examples of the Councils committing to improving spaces and places.

#### 4.38 ***Business Networking***

Further to direct interventions, the Councils also kept in close contact with our business networks to ensure 'on the ground' realities were fed through to allow the Councils to be flexible to react to the needs of the businesses. Active dialogue with Sussex Chamber of Commerce, Coastal West Sussex Partnership, Adur & Worthing Business Partnership and Worthing & Adur Chamber of Commerce provided an imperative connection during the last 18 months. These partnerships have strengthened as a result of the work undertaken to support the pandemic.

4.39 As a result of the networking and data collection through the covid business grants, the Councils now have a more comprehensive database of up to date business information. The majority businesses have 'opted in' to receive further information from the Councils, which provides greater

opportunity for engagement. This will be important as we move into the next economic recovery phase over the autumn and winter months (2021/22).

#### 4.40 ***Delivery of major development and investment projects***

Whilst the majority of the economic recovery work focused on individuals or businesses during the pandemic, the Councils felt it important to continue the Major Projects & Investment Programme to bring forward sites for economic growth. Work continued throughout the pandemic on the major sites, including the former Adur Civic Centre site, Union Place and Teville Gate in Worthing. A number of these sites will be mixed-use, therefore will provide much needed employment space and opportunities across our places.

## 5. Looking forward

### Short term delivery

5.1 There will be some significant impacts on vulnerable members of the Adur and Worthing community this autumn and winter. The reduction in Universal Credit, alongside the end of the furlough scheme, and rising food and fuel prices, mean that many of the Councils' most disadvantaged residents will be facing difficult financial choices. For businesses, recruitment remains a concern, especially in our key sectors, whilst new challenges exist regarding access to materials or products and the resilience of the supply chain.

5.2 In response to 5.1 there are some immediate strategies being put in place by the Councils', including:

- **Food** - provision of storage capacity to enable local food groups to store and share food, receive donations and bulk purchase food ahead of winter. In addition, funding will be provided directly to local food groups to support and enable their work ahead of Winter.
- **Financial support** - additional funding for Proactive (£12,000 for temporary agency staff) and money mentor financial support staff provided through the COMF funding to meet increased demand for help from low income residents. Work is also focusing on the development of clear information that will help direct communities to the help and support they need around finance, debt and utilities. In addition we are also continuing the work around Self Isolation payments and providing additional Council Tax Support of up to £150

per working age claimant (further details are provided in paragraph 4.9).

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing** - funding for an additional full time and part time Social Prescriber has been agreed to add increased capacity to the Going Local team. This will enable the Social Prescribers to spend more time connecting residents of Adur & Worthing into local community groups and services - improving their health and wellbeing. Through the Wellbeing Workplace Health initiative, Wellbeing Advisors are engaging with staff from local businesses to review and support their wellbeing needs, allowing employees to look at all aspects of their lifestyles. Employers are being given information on how to support their employees and are being encouraged to identify and provide training for a Mental Health First Aider within their workforce. For children and young people, Adur and Worthing is also piloting an approach to reduce school exclusions, and using grant funding to increase access to mentoring and bespoke support for children. We are also continuing to support the suicide prevention awareness work with Olly's Future (as detailed above)
- **Housing** - continues to work with those threatened with homelessness utilising homeless prevention and COMF funding to both prevent and relieve homelessness. Additionally we will be recruiting Lettings Support Officers, Move On Officers as well as staff to work on the AFEO scheme through the various funding awards we have received. We are also preparing to develop the next iterations of our homelessness strategy. Opening Doors continues to expand its portfolio of properties - a critical element supporting our work in delivering affordable homes.
- **Employment and Skills** - we have opened and are developing our new Youth Employment Hub in Worthing to provide invaluable holistic support and enablement for young people aged 18-24yrs around employment. Delivered alongside and using funding from the DWP, this hub is delivered in Marine Place and provides a space for young people to engage and be supported and directed to guidance, training, support and employment. Furthermore, as well as a number of other initiatives highlighted in this paper, the Councils' have also instigated an Employer Charter to work with a number of developers to embed an Employment and Skills Plan. The work around key sectors will also continue in relation to supporting local recruitment, for example with the healthcare sector.

- **Businesses** - the Councils will continue to harness the business networks that have been strengthened during the pandemic and ensure insight is gathered and businesses are signposted to appropriate support. This will include closer connections with Coast to Capital's Growth Hub. In addition, there is a growing need for us to focus attention on our key sectors (i.e. retail and hospitality, healthcare and construction) and examine the support needed that will be impactful for those sectors. Through funding secured from West Sussex County Council the Councils are already looking to provide independent retail opportunities, capitalising on a high percentage of people starting their own businesses as a result of the pandemic, whilst the delivery of Fabric in Lancing is a good example of an 'on the ground' intervention that will support existing and new businesses. The Councils will also continue to support the skills and innovation agenda by promoting apprenticeships, work experience and connecting businesses to Higher Education and Further Education facilities.

### **Medium to long term delivery**

5.3 The Councils' continue to examine how to respond to the more medium and longer term needs of Adur and Worthing communities and businesses. Planning is already underway to identify the impacts of the increasing costs and reduction in Universal Credit, as well as building the infrastructure to help future proof for further impacts. The effects on businesses are harder to determine as existing challenges are market driven, such as the resourcing of materials and supply chains, but the Councils' are aware of the need to monitor the situation and respond where appropriate.

5.4 Key strategies for the medium term include:

- Developing a sustainable approach to **healthy, local and sustainable food** that supports the development of two local food / community hubs, working with local groups to support and develop local food approaches. Our ambition is to co-produce this work with communities, aimed at enabling communities to access healthy local and sustainable food and that embrace cooking, sharing, learning, as well as tackling food waste and building local food supply chains.
- Implementing HealthAW 2021-2024, Adur and Worthing's **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**, which was reported to the Joint Strategic Committee in September ([report](#)), which sets out our ambitions around enabling our communities to thrive and focuses upon prevention and

early intervention and addressing the health and social inequalities exposed and deepened by the pandemic.

- Our **Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes** sets out our ambitions to not only deliver homes but pathways, acknowledging that move through is as important as supply, as well as ensuring connection to our communities and green spaces that supports our **Housing Strategy 2020-2023** to enable our communities to ‘thrive in their own homes’.
- Developing and using a robust **evidence base** to guide policy and strategy making, including identifying key sources of data and data gaps and ensuring that services are resourced and targeted based on available data.
- Implementing our **Good Work Programme** which will deliver, with partners, a series of employment and skills interventions to assist individuals, businesses and sectors to create resilience and growth in the job market. This will be guided by exploring the role of the Councils’ in different scenarios and examine how a relational approach may support this agenda.
- The health of our high streets, and therefore businesses, will continue to be monitored and the **Safe Towns Group** will be crucial in overseeing the consumer transition post pandemic. This agenda isn’t solely related to Covid-19, however this is an important aspect of the economy that we need to address by continuing to invest in our town centres.
- Implementation of our **major development and investment projects** will continue. As outlined in 4.40, a number of sites across Adur and Worthing are coming forward that will provide an increase in our employment footprint, whilst also bringing forward housing for current and future residents. Most notably, Decoy Farm in Worthing presents a good opportunity to significantly increase the employment base, whilst supporting growth with existing businesses and attracting new businesses in the process (inward investment).

## 6. Financial Implications

6.1 The Councils received considerable financial support throughout the pandemic from the government. In summary to date we have received grants totalling:

- Adur - £3.7m
- Worthing - £7.7m

6.2 These grants were used to support the programmes of work identified above as well as helping the Council address the financial impact of the pandemic on its own budgets.

6.3 In addition to the direct government grants, the Councils also received £68.3m funding from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to administer as business grants. These grant programmes closed at the end of August and any undistributed amounts are now being returned to the Government.

6.4 The Councils were also responsible for awarding significant additional business rate reliefs both in 2020/21 and in the current year.

	2020/21	2021/22	Total
	£'000	Estimated £'000	£'000
Covid reliefs awarded			
Adur	9,250	3,020	12,270
Worthing	16,910	5,980	22,890
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	26,160	9,000	35,160

40% of the cost of these reliefs is initially funded by the Councils. However, the Councils will be fully reimbursed for the financial impact associated with these grants via additional S31 government grant.

Finance Officer: Sarah Gobey

Date: 1st October 2021

## 7. Legal Implications

8.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

8.2 The Council has a wide general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation.

8.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

8.4 Section 1 Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the Council to enter into a contract for the provision of making available assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the Council.

8.5 The Contain Outbreak Management Fund is a Department of Health and Social Care fund set up to support Local Authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic. The various initiatives described in the report are subject to legal advice and support in formulating and implementing the Council's response to Covid-19 to ensure they are in accordance with the Council's power, duties and responsibilities.

8.6 When entering into a public contract whether or not with expenditure from grant funding received, the authority is required to comply with the grantor's funding terms and conditions and the Councils' Contract Standing Orders found at Part 4 of the Councils' constitution.

Legal Officer: Maria Memoli

Date: 27th September 2021

### **Background Papers**

- [JSC Paper - Chief Executive's use of Urgency Powers during the Covid-19 Global Pandemic \(June 2020\)](#)
- [A&W Coronarius Community Response Update \(June 2020\)](#)
- [JSC Paper - Covid 19 Response \(July 2020\)](#)
- ["And Then" bouncing back in post pandemic Adur and Worthing \(July 2020\)](#)
- [JSC Paper - Covid Funding and use of the Chief Executive's Urgency Powers \(June 2021\)](#)
- [JSC Paper - Proactive interventions to support low income residents \(July 2021\)](#)
- [JSC Paper - HealthyAW: Developing the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy, 2021-2024 \(September 2021\)](#)

**Officer Contact Details:-**

Name: Andy Willems

Role: Head of Place & Economy

Telephone: 01273 263179

Email: [andy.willems@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:andy.willems@adur-worthing.gov.uk)

Name: Tina Favier

Role: Interim Director for Communities

Telephone: 07850 900266

Email: [tina.favier@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:tina.favier@adur-worthing.gov.uk)

## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

### **1. Economic**

- The pandemic has had a major impact on the wider economy. Our approach to response has aimed to support our local residents and businesses and help to ensure they are resilient moving into the recovery phase. The impact on our local communities will be critical, whilst key sectors and access to employment opportunities, skills and training will also be key considerations going forward.

### **2. Social**

#### **2.1 Social Value**

- The pandemic has had a major impact on the lives of individuals, families and our communities. The community response has been a very important part of the councils' work during the response period and it will be vital to work with our partners and meet people's changing needs as we move through the recovery phase.

#### **2.2 Equality Issues**

- The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on some communities and this will need to continue to be reflected in our recovery planning and delivery.

#### **2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

- The pandemic has raised a number of community safety issues both direct and indirect. Issues that have arisen have been addressed in partnership with other agencies, notably the Police, to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to ensure a safe environment.

#### **2.4 Human Rights Issues**

No specific matters

### **3. Environmental**

- The importance of locally sourced goods and services has been highlighted during the response phase and is likely to be reflected in changing patterns of consumer behaviour which could provide opportunities for local business and employment.

### **4. Governance**

- The councils have adapted their formal governance arrangements during the response phase to ensure that they remain 'open for business' and able to deliver key services for our residents. At times, this has demanded that we exercise sensible regulatory principles to support community and commercial activity during this unprecedented period. Not to do so would have significant reputational impacts.

- Conducting the business of the council including aspects such as site visits; appointments at our offices and visiting people's homes; has meant that health and safety assessments and practise have had to be prepared and implemented rigorously.