

**To:** Audit and Governance Committee  
**Date:** 30 July 2020  
**Title:** **Business Continuity - Response to Covid-19**

## **Context**

This appendix provides an overarching summary by service area of the application of the Council's business continuity framework maintain critical services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Appendix is split into sections:

- Maintaining Business Continuity
- Key challenges
- Restart, recovery and renewal

## **Maintaining Business Continuity**

### **Business Improvement – Customer Contact Centre**

- Working closely with ICT to source equipment and provide training, all Customer Contact Centre staff were able to work from home.
- To protect the wellbeing of staff and customers, our face to face service ceased from Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March. The Council website was updated accordingly and signs put on St Aldates windows to alert customers and a “vulnerable resident” line was implemented alongside training designed to enable vulnerable resident calls which was rolled out remotely. The out of hours supplier agreed to take “vulnerable resident” calls out of hours from 26<sup>th</sup> March so there was continuity of service 24/7.
- Volunteers were sourced from across the Council who agreed to help if call volumes either in hours or out of hours became unmanageable. All were trained on taking vulnerable resident calls and a separate hunt group was set up to direct calls to them if required. To date we have not needed their services.
- We have been managing a number of outbound, calling campaigns to residents to check if they needed our help and support throughout the pandemic. If after 2 calls no contact can be made with the resident, details are passed to the locality hub to door knock. These include:
  - Residents identified as vulnerable on shielded lists
  - Residents we identified as potentially vulnerable from Northgate data
  - Residents over 70 from electoral register
  - Checking on whether residents still required food parcels
- We initiated a pilot in June to test video conferencing with our customers as an alternative to face to face contact. The take up has been low to date.
- We are looking at setting up video booths in locality hubs or community centres to allow customers to visit and engage with us without the need to log on to a video conferencing system.
- A representative from the Contact Centre attends the locality hub catch up meetings which were held daily, now twice a week, to give updates on Contact Centre performance and issues and to bring back any issues/concerns raised by the hubs into the Contact Centre
- We are trialling a new way to survey our customers by the use of text messaging. Initial results are encouraging as we have seen an increase in survey numbers.

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### **Business Improvement - ICT**

- High demand on network bandwidth following lockdown – addressed by increasing bandwidth
- Adoption of video conferencing tools – required (and still requires) lots of staff and member training
- Access to equipment – required organising delivery approach to ship equipment to staff at home
- Additional out of hours working requests for ICT staff – no funding model in place.

### **Community Services**

- The Community Services management team implemented the Councils Business Continuity Management (BCM) framework.
- A Service Business Recovery Team (BRT) was implemented and communicated to key stakeholders. The BRT reviewed, updated and communicated a revised version of the Service Business Continuity Plan (BCP). Initially BRT meetings were held daily, now 3 times a week.
- Methods of communications have been adapted and evolved, working in partnership with the Corporate Governance Manager who also attends Locality Resource Hubs (LRH) mop up sessions. Initially LRH mop up sessions were held daily, now twice a week.
- Normal service meetings were realigned or suspended and non-essential service provision was paused in a timely manner.
- Critical services were prioritised for recovery. These were identified through a process of risk management (assessing and prioritising risks, creating plans for identified risks and completing appropriate mitigation measures, etc). Alongside and intrinsically linked with prioritising needs for the most vulnerable residents and communities in the city.
- Service staff were re-deployed with essential training identified and delivered. New operating models were developed, risk assessed and resourced. These were scrutinised by senior stakeholders prior to implementation and are regularly reviewed by the BRT for continuous improvement.
- Service work and delivery models plans were remobilised and - where possible - aligned with operational plans and delivery models of other internal and external stakeholders or agencies. Alignment helps avoid duplication and enables better communication of services and new provision to and for residents and communities.
- New ways of working have been created, established and communicated across the service. This includes those who were redeployed from other service areas to support the live needs of the most vulnerable.
- Emphasis has also been placed on the wellbeing and resilience of all staff and continues to be applied.
- Existing and new partnerships were strengthened and created. Moving at a fast pace to understand community food systems within the City and to engage and work broadly with a range of partners across public, voluntary, and private sectors. This included working collectively with the Oxford Hub, schools, local food businesses, SOFEA (a food distribution charity), the Universities, Public Health, community food larders, community groups, and supermarkets, wholesalers, and farmers markets. Approved suppliers were set up to enable a quick, efficient, and effective supply lines to the hubs.
- Officers worked with Oxford Brookes University Centre for Nutrition and Health, Good Food Oxford and Public Health to ensure that food parcels gave nutritionally balanced and healthy options. We also catered for special dietary requirements, including those with religious requirements such as Halal and Kosher and worked in collaboration with Oxford Central Mosque to support vulnerable Muslims during Ramadan.

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### Corporate Policy & Partnership

- Creation of Coronavirus information page linked to front of website to convey Government, NHS and other advice to residents and businesses.
- Halted non-COVID related external communications from mid-March to focus team resources on communications relating to the pandemic.
- Initiated daily all-member and all-staff updates from the Chief Executive and expanded circulation of daily local media coverage to all Members to ensure flow of information and support the ability of teams, and Members, to respond to the rapidly changing situation.
- Embedded a Communications Officer into the Hubs & Single Point of Contact (SPOC) leadership team full time and similarly embedded the Communications Manager into the City Centre restart operation to support decision-making as well as communications and marketing.
- Seconded an officer from Environment Sustainability into Communications to provide additional cover.
- Communications Team update meetings held daily to share information and flex workload.
- Significant increase in communications output. 100 press releases issued in the past 13 weeks vs 259 in the whole of 2019.
- Operated weekends on call rota.
- Participation in several weekly strategic communication meetings:
  - Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum Media Advisory Cell
  - Oxfordshire Communications meeting – 6 Councils + OxLEP + Growth Board
  - South East Local Government communication briefing by Cabinet Office
  - Other ad hoc strategic communications meetings as required – eg Arc Communication Group, Test & Trace communications advisory group
- Partnerships and Data functions embedded into Hubs & SPOC Leadership team to support information gathering and dissemination, strengthen linkage with statutory and voluntary sector partners, and decision-making.
- Two colleagues released to support Hubs temporarily.

### Financial Services

- Overall Financial Services responded well with the closure of buildings and the requirement for staff to work from home where possible. Most of the services are now electronic and can therefore be delivered remotely. The daily treasury process which has long been paper based was converted into an electronic process in February as part of the general service drive to reduce paper and to improve business continuity contingency plans. There are still challenges in this area with the default position of banks and other financial institutions requiring “wet ink” copies of agreements and other documentation. The service is currently challenging these organisations on this approach.
- Another area where there are challenges is that of receipts and payments. The approach for a long time has been to make payments externally by BACS wherever possible and the service has now firmed its approach on this by requiring bank details in order to make payments out and not to therefore produce cheques. The Council and Oxford Direct Services still receive a significant amount of income in cash and cheques. This area has proved more challenging despite having pay point available as a method of payment, however there is a project currently underway to review this.

### Housing

- As the landlord via our contractor (Oxford Direct Services Limited (ODSL)) we continued to offer emergency repairs and works to ensure health and safety compliance ie gas servicing and electrical inspection and remedial works. This proved problematic as some residents were reluctant allow access and so a backlog has built up.

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- As the landlord we continued to process repairs to empty properties and the letting of those properties. We needed to adjust to maintain the furnished tenancy scheme. This involved stock piling goods before suppliers locked down. ODSL adapted as a removal firm due to our normal service providers being locked down.
- Due to the Government's requirement for every rough sleeper either on the street or in shared space settings to be given accommodation so that they were able to self-isolate if necessary. OCC procured over 120 bed spaces either from the Youth Hostels Association, hotels and University and repurposed the Outreach Team and services at Floyds Row from St Mungos to manage and provide support services to this client group. This was achieved in 3 weeks.
- Maintained statutory homeless assessments virtually, including temporary accommodation placements.
- Movement of tenancy sustainment capacity and capability to the hubs to support the most vulnerable.
- Property Services support to close down buildings safely and maintain health and safety compliance, such as water management and fire safety equipment testing and to support colleagues in ODSL with emergency repair needs.
- New build sites in the Housing Company were paused.

### **Law & Governance**

- The main changes for the service relate to the need, at short notice, for all staff to work from home in a service where working from home was largely one day a week. The Head of Law & Governance put in place an updated scheme of delegation with greater scope and flexibility to ensure that there was sufficient cover in case of absence during the pandemic to enable continuity of decision making and the Council's business.
- Home working was dependent on all staff having the required ICT available, working properly with any issues with it being resolved quickly.
- With regard to corporate decision making, initially, officer delegations using emergency powers were extended. Subsequently, arrangements for remote meetings of Council and committees under new regulations passed in April 2020 were adopted.
- The potential for data breaches when staff are working from home and for there to be effective security arrangements for remote meetings, especially of Council and committees, were challenges that it was necessary to address.
- With regard to the risk of data breaches, staff were reminded to adhere to the top ten tips so that the risk of a breach was minimized.

### **Planning**

- Planning is a statutory service and the expectation from Central Government was for the planning service to continue to function as normal because it would help the economy and also because it was recognised that the planning service would be needed to assist the mitigation measures they would introduce to help deal with the pandemic.
- As a result, the service had to mobilise to ensure all statutory performance targets for planning applications and appeals were met, and the timetable for the adoption of the local plan would continue. Although Central Government subsequently introduced various pieces of temporary legislation to enable the service to function throughout the lockdown, it meant the service had to adapt its processes to business as usual in the first instance and then respond to further changes to legislation.
- It is important to recognise that the response put forward to maintain service delivery should be seen as mitigation and not the ideal way to operate for the service. There are parts we can take forward as a new way of working, but the ability to operate these long term will greatly depend on whether Central Government maintains the temporary legislation to

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enable us to work in this manner and the nature of projects that require different forms of engagement.

- The new procedures developed for some of our statutory procedures to enable these to be carried out remotely, prior to the pandemic, made us well placed to adapt to the requirement to work from home full time during the lockdown.
- New procedures were introduced for the posting of site notices in order to ensure that applications were advertised in accordance with our statutory duty.
- Identified protocols for carrying out site visits on risk basis for individual and legal risk of challenge to any decisions made. Pro-forma for assessing whether site visit could be carried out remotely; use of pro-forma or file note on system for recording decision; trialling virtual site visit through photos from applicant / video call with neighbour; use of extension of time to delay determination until lockdown rules change and allow site visit.
- Sought immediate changes to the constitution to allow the Head of Service to use emergency powers to determine non-delegated planning applications.
- Introduced virtual committee meetings as part of working group for remote council meetings.
- Stopped face to face planning duty, but continued service through remote advice.
- Implemented temporary changes made to government legislation to allow system to operate.
- Amended the Statement of Community Involvement for planning to enable the Local Plan to move forward for adoption. This involved introducing several measures to comply with planning regulations and ensure the public sector equality duty was met in terms of reducing the risk of anyone being prejudiced by adopting the plan during lockdown measures.
- Adapted Oxford Design Review Panel to continue virtually so that schemes could still be progressed.
- Continued to take forward actions for the Housing Delivery Test virtually including meetings with key site promoters to gain intelligence about key barriers and risks for delivery in Oxford.

### **Regeneration & Major Projects**

- All staff moved to working from home without any major ICT issue.
- Prior to lockdown, a detailed plan was put in place to ensure there was cover across the team in case of absence.
- We did not furlough from the Property Management Team which deals with our core portfolio. Council income from property is over £12m and around 65% has been collected. Three members of the Development Team were furloughed for the first period but bought back when it became clear that housing construction companies were going back on site. Whilst the timing 'worked' for us, this was a lesson on how to carefully balance revenue savings against housing delivery and workloads for remainder of the team.
- Rent recovery protocol put in place to deal with tenants struggling to pay rent as a result of lockdown.
- Regeneration & Major Projects fronted all arrears discussions with tenants rather than Financial Services and whilst this increased workload for the team it enabled those with the best skill set in those circumstances to participate in the discussions.
- Daily Management Team meetings held with live daily log of issues.
- Asset Management Plan – agreed to delay by 6 months to summer 2021 in order that it can fully respond to changes in service strategy changes in light of post pandemic property needs. Detailed programme in place to keep on track.
- Close liaison with the Director gives insight into organisational issues and ensures top level cover for team.

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- Strengthening of Asset Review Group ensures wider oversight across all teams linked to use of assets, closer liaison with Property Services around Health and Safety / Construction, Design and Management Regulations (CDM) and particularly re-occupation of units.
- Regular updates to tenants of any new support available and help to access where appropriate. This has helped protect our income stream.

### **Regulatory Services & Community Safety**

- The transformation to working from home (WFH) has meant that there have been technological problems to overcome and wellbeing pressures to address. Additional equipment such as monitors and chairs were needed to enable staff to WFH and connection issues were resolved. Some staff have domestic arrangements that are not able to satisfactorily support WFH eg young children at home, shared accommodation or small living spaces with no suitable working area. Flexibility was required to enable these people to WFH successfully as well as working from Hubs and ultimately returning to St Aldates Chambers was facilitated.
- The level of communication and contact has had to increase significantly to maintain communications. Whereas senior management team meetings were held on a fortnightly basis, they started as daily telephone calls and then turned into video conferences. These then went to three times a week and then twice a week. This has been mirrored for the Regulatory Services & Community Safety management team who previously met on a monthly basis. The increased level of communications was also adopted by teams who now meet at least once a week, sometimes twice. There have also been service wide emails and Zoom meetings. This increase in communications will be maintained as WFH is normalised, although it is recognised that it takes time and resource.
- Regulatory Services & Community Safety have a visit based service delivery model. We carry out both proactive & reactive visits. We survey, inspect, check and verify, respond to service requests, evidence gather and enforce, monitor and also promote services by visits. The majority of these visits form part of a legal requirement or are actually required, eg Building Control and food hygiene inspections.
- As a result of COVID all routine visits were stopped apart from a defined list of emergencies ie serious and imminent risk to health and safety and procedures were put in place to safely deliver those visits if they were necessary.
- A risk based approach was already in place for carrying out interventions eg questionnaires for low risk food businesses instead of food hygiene inspections and photos being accepted as compliance from accredited landlords, so services had to consider what was appropriate to accept without visiting using a risk based approach.
- The bar was lowered for accepting risk. For example Building Control and the Home Improvement Agency accepted photos, videos & certificates rather than inspecting works. Video conferencing was used to discuss compliance with landlords and photos were accepted as evidence of compliance for a far wider range of premises. Responsibility for visits in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) was transferred to accredited letting agents who have been providing updates for HMO Enforcement staff, ie an earned autonomy model.
- A lower level of customer service was delivered across the service as visits could not be made to verify issues or complaints. The Tenancy Relations Officer holds a weekly surgery in St Aldates Chambers which is used primarily by tenants who do not have English as their first language and this has had to stop. It has not been possible to deliver the same level of service for those clients. In addition the inability to cold call suspected HMOs meant that no enforcement action has been possible in what is typically the area with the highest levels of formal legal action. This legal action includes issuing financial penalties up to £30k so being

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unable to visit has also cut off a valuable source of income that is recycled to maintain service levels.

- The service issues licences for a large number of businesses for a range of statutory requirements. The businesses have also suffered financially and pressed the Council to help them out. This has resulted in a range of measures being implemented including introducing shorter and cheaper licenses, deferring fees for taxi drivers until October, cancelling all new applications, accepting self-declarations on medical fitness from drivers and deferring compliance with incoming emissions standards. In addition, street traders, particularly those who rely on the night time economy, were not allowed to trade and so they were not able to pay for their consents and so no income was received for quarter one of the financial year. This is a significant financial loss to the Council.
- To help taxi drivers the General Licensing Team allowed them to use expired plates and badges and issued letters for the drivers and vehicle users to have in their possession in the event of a challenge being made by a customer. The Team later arranged to use the Hubs to distribute new plates and badges.

### **Key challenges**

#### **Business Improvement – Customer Contact Centre**

- There have been issues with calls connecting we think mainly due to signal problems. Although the call does bounce to another officer if it can't connect, some customers hang up at this point. This has increased our abandon call rate throughout the pandemic period.
- Keeping on top of all the different outbound calling campaigns and results has been challenging but we have achieved this without adversely affecting inbound call performance.
- Some Customer Services Officers have found it difficult to manage work life balance and childcare requirements. We have adjusted shift times and moved them off of inbound calling to help them manage their work/life balance.
- Communication in general has been more challenging with all staff working from home and the amount of changes that had to be communicated and disseminated by officers.
- Contact Centre staff have struggled without seeing other people on a daily basis, feelings of isolation which has affected wellbeing. We have maintained Team meetings, One to Ones, Communications Time and more recently implemented 30 minute coffee catch up sessions to help them with this.

#### **Community Services**

- Mobilising services and staff during a mandatory period of social isolation.
- Maintaining and building further resilience whilst delivering in an unprecedented and changing scenario.
- Capacity to reactively source essential supplies and services (ie internally – remote working; externally – establishing new supply chains within procurement guidelines).
- Interpretation of changes in law
- Managing work life balance (ie where responsibilities may have grown, childcare needs and homeworking, etc).

#### **Corporate Policy & Partnership**

- Limited staffing capacity within the Communications Team to deal with significant increase in communication needs - in particular, need to be able to service communications into the evening, 5 days a week
- Decision-making over withdrawal of colleagues from Hubs – perhaps due to lack of agreement at the outset about what would trigger such a withdrawal

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### Financial Services

- A consequence of making services electronic is that there even more reliance on ICT than ever before and so therefore the delivery of the service relies heavily on the continued provision of ICT, pushing the risk of loss of ICT to the service even higher than it was before.
- Another concern is that, with the increased financial pressures that the Council is now under, additional work caused through the payments of grants to businesses and the continuing need to deliver the day job, staff are under more pressure than ever before and many are finding that they are working longer hours to deliver what is required. There is an increase in workloads and increased volumes of emails and online meetings in addition to these increasing demands and so there is a risk of increased stress levels and staff burnout.

### Housing

- From 1 July 2020 we are preparing to restart all our planned maintenance programmes eg new kitchens, bathrooms rewires etc, and catch up with a backlog of repairs and compliance testing eg gas safety
- Landlord services are planning to deal with a backlog of service requests eg mutual exchanges and what further service changes are needed to successfully support homeless households into permanent accommodation from temporary.
- Of most significance is our rough sleeping exit strategy and we are working with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) with regard to support funding that means no one needs to return to the streets. We have already submitted both interim proposals to mitigate the risk of loss of hotel accommodation and an outline long term plan.
- We are scenario planning for a growth in statutory homelessness demand as economy moves into recession, creating space in our temporary accommodation provision as well as looking at allocations policy to support both this demand and as part of the rough sleeping exit strategy.
- Property Services will support the safe recommissioning of buildings as they begin to be used.
- Housing Company sites will reopen but of strategic significance is a complete refresh of the business plan to reflect risks to market sales and potential increase to build costs.

### Law & Governance

- The key risks are around the accessibility and security of meetings and the soundness of decisions being undermined by technical failures. To mitigate these risks we have deployed new devices and offered training to Members and have established a robust protocol for remote meetings. This work was overseen by a cross-party group of Members and the protocol has been adopted by full Council.
- Other challenges have been the difficulty of accessing hard copy files and records, printing documents, sealing contracts and dealing with the post that has been sent via Royal Mail. These issues have been largely overcome by staff having occasional access to St Aldate's Chambers.
- It has not been possible to hold physical meetings, and training or briefing sessions for Members. The regular file retention and disposal work has not been carried out because access to the Town Hall basement has been prohibited.
- In addition, Housing possession and litigation Court work has stopped – the Courts have virtual or telephone hearings where possible.
- To date, it has been possible to run the electoral registration preparatory canvass work remotely. At the next stage of the process, office access will be required.

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### Planning

- To ensure that the statutory service would continue as business as usual in response to advice from Central Government.
- The time taken for central government to introduce temporary legislation to allow changes to statutory provisions such as consultations and virtual committees as part of Covid-19 response.
- No legislative changes to deal with the requirements under planning regulations that require people to view documents in hard copy. We identified mitigating actions early to reduce risk but introduced risk of challenge. This also came with a cost in terms of the legal advice required and costs of posting letters and documents that would not have been necessary normally.
- Implementing a new local plan remotely is a challenge in terms of training staff and members on the plan effectively when the document is complex in nature.
- The ability to post site notices as some officers were self-isolating, others do not live in close proximity to the city etc, meant it had to be shared between locally based officers.
- Unable to begin monitoring of delivery on the ground, the data from which has to be provided annually to government. Sought to compensate with virtual meetings but unable to get all required information virtually.
- The ability to effectively validate and register planning applications – further remote working from applications team; scanning issues from the team being remote (ie variable download speeds)
- Issues with the “Uniform” system using remote access; it is extremely slow and can crash which can result having to redo work.
- Email traffic much higher in part due to conversations / advice that would have happened naturally across desks having to be specifically emailed about and actioned.
- Planning is a collaborative process involving significant negotiation with customers and other stakeholders across a range of diverse issues. This is challenging virtually when looking through detailed information on screen alone.
- There is a requirement for staff to undertake continued professional development which is often achieved through collaborative work and informal training eg Case/project conferencing within the team and through team leaders. We are also training several apprentices within the service. This is heavily reliant on face to face discussions either through One to Ones or the ability to have dialogue within the team. The remote working makes this more reliant on formal meetings and makes vocational training more challenging and time consuming.
- The restriction on working practices and remote working has lengthened the average officer time it takes to deal with most tasks within the planning service
- The remote working has had an impact on wellbeing of staff members – home environments not geared up for working from home full time which in some cases cannot be resolved through providing suitable equipment. People living in shared houses / broadband capabilities etc has made people feel more isolated. Officers with children have had to balance home working with home schooling – extending the core hours of their work. Some of the issues experienced have outweighed some of the benefits to remote working such as saving on the commute etc. This has knock on implications on manager’s time. More time has needed to be spent on wellbeing to compensate for the above which means there is less manager time available for planning work than before. The work life balance in many cases is not where it should be.
- Communications between service areas have reduced as people understandably have become very team focussed with a risk of slipping back into silos.

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- Moving forward with new complex multi-disciplinary projects that need to engage a wide variety of stakeholders effectively eg new local plan and complex site consultations is a challenge remotely and potentially more time consuming.
- Training of new starters and performance management less effective virtually.

### **Regulatory Services & Community Safety**

- The emergency action taken by the Council to create Hubs to help vulnerable people impacted upon the service. A service manager and a team manager from the Community Safety Service were engaged as Hub Co-ordinators which meant that the management capacity of the service was significantly reduced. At the same time the General Licensing Team Manager was working reduced hours due to maternity leave. This major drop in capacity had to be filled by the Head of Service, the Community Response Team Manager and a Senior Licensing Officer in the General Licensing Team.
- Approximately half the Community Response Team (CRT) were seconded into the Hub leaving the other half dealing with existing and incoming cases of anti-social behaviour and enviro-crime. Several members of the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT) were also drafted into the Hubs leaving the others dealing with the existing and incoming cases. Case numbers for CRT did not drop and ASBIT cases doubled compared to the same time in 2019. As the officers were not able to visit, they had to deal with issues over the phone and given the resource reduction and demand pressure the aim was to close cases down rather than provide the usual level of service.
- As lockdown eases it is anticipated that there will be a large number of service requests that will flow into the Council, particularly from tenants in the private rented sector where there has been a drop in the number of calls to the Council. There will also be backlogs in other areas such as General Licensing where demand has been pushed back, but will still need to be dealt with.

### **Restart, recovery and renewal**

#### **Community Services**

The service approach for review and monitoring delivery models, identifying new issues and risks includes:

- Changes in law and guidelines
- The live situation
- Needs of the most vulnerable
- Operational resilience, resources and readiness
- Forward looking and lessons learnt
- Appropriate effective media and communication channels
- Partner needs and their sustainability.

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### Planning

- The need to provide suitable equipment to allow more remote working capabilities. For example, the “paperlite” system helps officers work remotely, but the delivery of the tablets and the IDOX application have been held up through technical issues. This would have made WFH easier for some.
- The need to consider how we can continue to case/project conference / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) / manage performance through remote working in order to improve wellbeing and manage the different circumstances of staff.
- A very real impact that the conference calls used for meetings of all kinds – internal and external – takes a lot of time out of the working day and places huge pressure on resources of team leaders and officers. That needs to be managed more appropriately. The number of back to back calls with no breaks needs managing.
- That we will also need to ensure that the working practices set up by the organisation as a whole give proper regard to the fact that there are statutory requirements set by the government which will dictate how we work.
- That the centralised customer service model may not work in a remote working post Covid-19 world and that service areas will need far greater control over their administrative function in order to reduce risk to the service and reducing the amount of handling of data amongst remote workers.
- Virtual planning committees have worked with a lot more resources needed to operate successfully and have to be run during the working day but there is a risk that Central Government will not allow us to continue post covid-19.
- There is a need for the planning files in the basement to be scanned so that officers and the public have access to this information when the offices are closed or access restricted.
- Need to properly scope and stakeholder map projects effectively at the beginning more than ever to try and avoid silo working.

### Regulatory Services & Community Safety

- For the future we are planning to further develop mobile working across teams. The Home Improvement Agency has tablets and the Business Regulation Team and Building Control Team have developed mobile systems and are implementing them. The General Licensing Team are due to start the journey to mobile working and the HMO Enforcement and Private Sector Safety Teams are exploring how inspection activities can be delivered. Solutions need to be identified for the CRT and ASBIT.
- We would like to use Robotic Processing Automation (RPA) to improve service request handling across the service with Safer Oxford as priority. We will also be identifying if RPA can improve licensing and other application processes to go fully online – particularly HMO, Building Control and General Licensing.
- We will further develop where a risk based approach can reduce resource requirements for visits/inspections and seek to maintain the arrangements that have been successful during lockdown.
- We will also be part of the development of the next phase of the Hub model across all the teams in the service and use community engagement & involvement to improve and target services where possible. The aim is to use Hubs to enable service reduction, service improvement and service generation, in particular where there is excess demand.

### **Conclusion**

Restart, recovery and renewal will be an ongoing process that helps anticipate, prepare in the event of a second spike, response to and recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

The Services will continue to deliver and develop effective processes to help mitigate risks to the smooth running and delivery of services, ensuring they can best continue to operate to the extent required in the event of COVID-19 and beyond. These are likely to include:

- Task and finish groups
- Identifying alternative strategies to mitigate further loss and assessing their potential effectiveness in maintaining ability to deliver critical and new - some unknown – service functions
- Contract variations
- New ways of working
- Staff well-being and resilience
- Service transformation (ie using skills and learning to create new structure)
- Budget review and re-prioritisation
- Generating new revenue
- Shielding the most vulnerable
- Healthy Place Shaping
- Strengthening and creating new partners
- Transforming the service business plan to help address new challenges and changing needs.