

Appendix 1 - COVID-19 Lessons Learnt

Service Area	Lesson learnt reference	Reality	Response	Result
Business Cell	1	Assembly of the grants team had to be sourced quickly. Staff were faced with working from home, in a new area and with new team members, under pressure to make payments quickly and regularly dealing with distressed businesses.	Microsoft Teams was used for instant messenger and video calls, to enable staff to effectively communicate. Training around difficult conversations was provided and debriefing between team members was promoted to support staff's mental well-being.	The team worked effectively together to deal with difficult circumstances and supported one another both personally and professionally.
	2	The grant schemes relied heavily on the business rates system and required specialist knowledge held by only a small number of staff. This meant that the individuals with this knowledge faced pressure to provide business as usual and facilitate/support the business grant scheme.	Informal, ad-hoc training was provided to the wider grants team to support the administration of the schemes.	The team's business rates knowledge has expanded as a result of being involved with the grant schemes. Only two members of the grants team are from a Revenues background and will take this knowledge back to the department when the team is disbanded.
	3	Many businesses which had not previously notified the council of their occupation came forward as a result of the grants. This meant accounts needed to be updated prior to payment. This meant additional pressure on the Revenues Team to amend liabilities at speed.	Business rates accounts were updated, and subsequent post payment checks have documented any changes that are still required.	Data has been cleansed and updated following new information that emerged from grants intelligence. Accounts will continue to be updated as post assurance checks identify any required. A Business Intelligence Officer post has been created to pull together business information from across the services.

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	4	Pre-payment checks were limited due to Government pressure on Local Authorities to pay grants as quickly as possible. Government has therefore required the council to undertake post-payment assurance checks, which is resource intensive.	The grants team has continued to undertake post payment checks alongside any new grant schemes. The application process was changed to obtain additional mandatory information when the second national lockdown grant scheme was introduced in November 2020.	The added requirement of a mandatory bank statement during the November lockdown means that the Council has greater level of assurance that the grants were paid to the correct party and will reduce the need for more in-depth post payment checks. Subsequent schemes have also required additional evidence. We have refined our processes taking learning from each of the schemes.
Communications and graphics	5	In the early stages of the council's response, we were overwhelmed with information nationally, regionally and locally. This led to information posted on our website to become congested and difficult to interpret for our residents.	A mini project involving the communication's team and the web developer to create a micro-site specific for Covid-19 information.	Developed and implemented in under a week the site allows the communication of information in a more structured and user-friendly manner.
	6	Working from home full-time was new for most services and the demand for advice and information was very high.	To support home-working, we pulled together an easy-reference guidance tool, as well as a 'best practice communications' leaflet, giving top tips around the use of teams, emails, voicemails, phones and general home working.	Provided clear and easy-to-follow advice and helped to manage expectations in terms of what is required when working from home.

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	7	Keeping members and parish councils engaged in our response to the pandemic was a priority.	The communications team delivered a weekly bulletin to members, parish councils and staff – recording all elements of the council’s response.	The demand of this work was significant, but the result meant that the audiences felt engaged and updated thus our reputation was very positive.
	8	The pressure on the communications team was immense, particularly as we only had one part-time communications officer.	The creation of a communications cell with officers re-deployed from other corporate work. In October 2020, we employed a full-time communications officer (albeit on a two year contract)– a key recommendation from the March 2020 peer challenge.	The team has done an absolutely fantastic job of responding to the pandemic and ensuring the council’s many audiences are kept engaged in our response.
	9	Being at the forefront of receiving the latest information on the pandemic (particularly death rates) created anxiety within the team.	Support from the council in terms of managing worries and anxiety, as well as managing childcare. Regular team check-ins and reassurance was needed.	This was a difficult issue to avoid given the role of the team, but their team spirit and support meant they not only found the resilience to continue but they did a brilliant job.
	10	With so many different messages to convey, creating really engaging ways of delivering messages became a priority.	The comms team introduced video guides and animations – utilising new skills and creating engaging content.	Increased engagement across all platforms, particularly social media and internally.
Community and Economic Development	11	Team split and staff moved into specific cells to meet the related needs of the community and	Recognition of needing dedicated data support and assistance.	Specific role assigned to data collection and co-ordination.

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		business community – whilst managing the day job. Some staff are/were also working across two cells. There was also changing personnel within cells, having to re-train staff.	Recognised that w/e working not always required.	
			Recognised that staff goodwill a key factor in success.	
			Recognition of skill sets of staff that could be utilised (may be different to their job role)	
	12	Through Help Hub requests, there was uncertainty over what support other agencies could provide for residents in need. Issues passed to team, when nowhere else to turn.	Meetings set up with relevant agencies to understand what expertise they could provide.	Information pack produced and regular meetings with key agencies such as ASC and other districts.
			Regular discussions at County Community Resilience Group on how to improve systems	Clear advice on Help Hub
	13	Staff not trained to deal with difficult enquiries, including residents going through severe mental health issues and major life/work changes.	Discussions with staff regarding support required.	Staff training provided and gaining support and advice from organisations who deal with cases on regular basis.
	14	Volume of government information and advice, often requiring immediate interpretation and implementation.	Reading information and interpreting it.	Responsibility for this assigned to role within the Community Cell.
	15	In the early stages of response,	A new GDPR email group was set	A GDPR comms plan ensured

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Corporate (business transformation, policy & performance, GDPR etc)		our corporate resource was redeployed to support the business grants team. This had an impact on maintaining the profile and importance of GDPR.	up to ensure resilience when breaches were reported. A staff briefing was held as a reminder of the importance of responding to GDPR breaches and managing personal data while working from home.	regular data protection comms was issued to all staff to help retain its profile.
	16	While most services were in response mode, the impact on responding to complaints and FOIs was fairly significant.	<p>The pressure on services to respond to FOIs and complaints was reduced – this was a management team decision.</p> <p>Messages were put on auto-email responses, the website and through customer services that response times to complaints and FOIs would be affected by our response to the pandemic.</p>	The pressure on services responding to the pandemic was reduced because customer expectation was managed.
	17	Staff working remotely – managing the pressure of being redeployed but wanting to maintain their current role’s reputation.	Corporate messages helped reduce the pressure on individual staff, and regularly meetings over Teams to reassure that expectations had changed in terms of delivering on corporate issues.	Working from home is now very much the norm, and productivity is excellent.
	18	As we moved into recovery mode, it was difficult to encourage some	Heads of service and operational managers were encouraged to	This was always going to be a difficult issue, particularly for

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		services to prioritise issues such as complaints and FOIs – it also seemed that the public’s empathy for our response lessened as time went on, resulting in an increase in complaints around communication from services.	respond to FOIs and complaints in a timely way and within the required timescales.	those teams who have been so heavily involved in the response and recovery. There have been a handful of complaints gone to stage 2 as a result of our lack of response to customer contact, but on the whole there has not been a major problem thanks to the response from management.
	19	The business transformation team’s launch was delayed until August 2020 with most of the team redeployed.	Regular communication between the team and clear priorities meant members of the team felt ready to work together as soon as they were able to. There was a reduction in time (four months) available to go live with the new digital platform.	The amount this team has achieved in less than 12 months is remarkable. We have now gone live with a new digital platform – making a positive impact for all involved. The team has never worked together in person, and it has an excellent set up for working remotely with regular team check-ins, meetings and creative sessions.
	20	The pressure on the council’s web and digital designer was significant as the role was the single point for creating online forms.	This role created a significant number of online forms particularly for business grants.	The access to online forms for our customers was fantastic thanks to the work of this role. Our forms were clear, easy to fill out and understand.

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				Although this officer has done a fantastic job the pure relentlessness of it has resulted in a need for us to consider expanding our resource in this area moving forward. The transformation team is currently considering this.
Customer Services	21	The team had never worked from home pre-pandemic.	Ensuring the team had the correct equipment, the appropriate home set up and understood their role in the pandemic.	Despite some initial anxiety the team adapted very well. It did highlight areas for training need – and this has been delivered and resulted in a more competent and confident team. Highlights all of the team does not have to be office based.
	22	Working from home created challenges in communicating with Ubico on customer issues.	A daily report was introduced with a round-up of the day's issues. Ubico would respond early the following day so customer services team could respond to enquiries.	A much smoother and streamlined way of working and has helped improve the working relationship. This is something we will continue to do outside of the pandemic.
	23	Managing sickness levels remotely.	Despite working remotely, this was managed effectively through supportive Teams meetings with HR, the operational manager and team leader.	Ensuring we followed the council's sickness absence policy correctly showed that these issues will still be taken seriously, and staff will feel supported to ensure they can

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				carry out their role comfortably from home.
	24	Supporting teams in managing phone calls.	The demand on the team increased with other services in response mode. The team was proactive in offering support to teams such as housing, EH and planning.	<p>Increased customer satisfaction through resolving issues through first contact where possible.</p> <p>Teams in response mode were able to focus more on their role while the customer services team did what they could to manage expectations/resolve issues.</p>
	25	One member of the team remains redeployed in the business cell – the impact of this is being felt now we are returning to opening offices and advice and information centres. (AIC)	Now the offices are open, the team has to cover phones, reception and the AIC. We are reviewing the way we run the AIC - following offers of support from parish councils and the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Winchcombe. Given the very small numbers who visit the AICs, there will be great benefits to working in partnership to deliver this service.	By working with parish councils and the TIC in Winchcombe, we can ensure that our AIC offering continues but the demand on the customer services team is reduced.
Democratic Services	26	Arrangements needed to be made for decision-making meetings to take place.	In the first few months of lockdown all meetings were suspended whilst investigations were undertaken to provide an online offering.	In May the first meeting via Zoom was held and remote meetings continued for 12 months. During this time, there were a number of difficulties as it

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				<p>was a steep learning curve for both Officers and Members. Public participation was included which had challenges in relation to user technology. The Council was starting from a point of never having had remote meetings or broadcasting meetings so this was quite an achievement.</p>
	27	<p>In May 2021 the legislation allowing for remote meetings ended and arrangements had to be put into place for meetings to take place in a COVID secure environment.</p>	<p>Meetings were undertaken with Property and IT and arrangements were put into place for public meetings to be held.</p>	<p>Since May meetings (where the public are entitled to attend) have taken place in the building. Precautions to ensure the safety of all involved have been put in place. This has been a learning process which has required Member support and generally has gone well. As we move forward, a gradual return to normality is happening which requires constant liaison with Property and advice from Environmental Health as restrictions are still in place and the Council has certain health and safety duties which need to be adhered to.</p>
	28	<p>Members could no longer come into the Offices to access</p>	<p>Members received various briefing notes from the</p>	<p>This was a steep learning curve for Members and Officers in</p>

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		information from Officers.	Communications Team, were set up to have Teams meetings with Officers and received updates from the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive.	terms of technology and some Members felt that dedicated support from Democratic Services would have better met their needs as had been provided by the County Council for its Councillors.
	29	All Members had been provided with iPads prior to the pandemic but they had little use.	Because of the need do to everything remotely, considerable support was provided by IT and Democratic Services to assist Members with remote working.	Whilst it was a steep learning curve, Members did really well with the technology; although there were drawbacks with some Members feeling isolated, issues with suitable areas when working from home and impingement on normal homelife. On the positive side there were savings in terms of travel and time.
	30	Member induction programme ended and, in view of the pandemic, there was a focus on managing meetings and running the Council's business remotely.	A couple of planning sessions were held on Zoom which went very well.	A Member training programme now needs to be resurrected that, following the experiences of the pandemic, could be part remote and part face to face. Remote sessions would have the benefit of savings on trainers not needing to attend the offices.
	31	Many of the systems in elections and Member services were paper based.	Where possible some of those were made electronic.	Going forward those that have moved to electronic have worked well but there is still more to be done. However, it must be borne

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				in mind that some of our processes by statute require paper forms and return envelopes so there remains a reliance on paper-based systems.
	32	Staff were encouraged to work from home where possible.	Officers did work from home but there were times when this was not possible, particularly in preparing for the May 2021 elections.	Going forward there will be a mix of home-working and office-working as required to meet the needs of the service.
	33	As the 2020 elections were postponed and meetings were on hold for a short period, Officers from the team were redeployed to support the community hub.	Officers rose to this challenge, but it was a very steep learning curve and completely different from their normal roles.	A much-needed resource was provided for the community hub in supporting the residents of the Borough and the work was very rewarding and gratefully received by those that needed it. However, it was very challenging and mentally draining on the staff who, as time went on, had to resurrect their normal roles in addition to the work on the hub. Going forward, should this be required again much more training and support would be needed, particularly in terms of emotional support for staff which was provided at quite a late stage. The processes were constantly updated as the requirements changed quickly

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				<p>which added a strain on the team. A number of Members provided invaluable support to the hub team. Cross section working and communication with Officers who were more familiar with these types of situations was extremely helpful and it was interesting to see how issues were dealt with in different teams.</p>
	34	<p>The government made the decision that the 2021 elections should proceed.</p>	<p>In order to ensure the safety of staff, electors etc. all polling stations were individually assessed, with the help of specialist advice, and all processes changed to accommodate COVID-19 requirements.</p>	<p>The elections were very successfully run in all aspects, but this is not a function that can be done from home. Whilst every area was very challenging the team responded well to meeting the additional requirements; however, the support of other sections was absolutely crucial as was that of the polling station staff in accommodating the additional COVID-19 requirements.</p>
	35	<p>There was a curtailment of the annual canvass to update the Register of Electors.</p>	<p>A decision was made to send a Household Notification Letter to all properties to check the accuracy of the Register of Electors.</p>	<p>There was a significant amount of change which had occurred which would not have been captured had the process not been undertaken - this resulted in more electors being able to</p>

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				vote.
Development Management	36	In the early stages of the pandemic it was clear that we would be unable to provide officers with paper application files as had been normal practice.	Paper files were no longer provided and officers, working remotely and with appropriate technology, were able to process applications without a paper file.	In the majority of cases paper files will no longer need to be created which reduces administrative costs and use of paper.
	37	Publicising planning applications by way of site notices during the pandemic caused significant practical problems which led to delays in the processing of applications and consequent backlogs of work.	During the lockdown periods applicants/agents were asked to display notices.	Whilst the problem was overcome, the issue did highlight the need to review the way the council publicises applications. The issue would not have been felt so keenly had the council publicised most of its applications by way of neighbour notification.
	38	Face to face meetings were not possible during the various stages of the pandemic.	All team meetings etc. were organised via MS Teams. Planning committee was organised in liaison with Democratic Services and ICT. All officers were provided with the equipment to enable all types of meetings to be help effectively.	Meetings have been held effectively whilst remote working. There is a wider awareness that face to face meetings are not always necessary and can be much more effective and efficient when held remotely, as well as reducing travelling cost/time and the consequent environmental impacts.
	39	During lockdown it was difficult to access paper records.	Individual officers volunteered to work in the office on a limited	An inefficient yet effective system was put in place to

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			basis so that records could be accessed where necessary and provided to officers/customers.	retrieve records however, the digitisation of all records should be a priority.
	40	Officers were unable to undertake physical site visits at various stages during lockdown. Committee site visits were not possible at times.	Applicants/agents were asked to provide visual material including photographs/videos of sites which could be used, where appropriate, as a proxy for a physical site visit.	The processing of applications was able to continue in the majority of cases without a physical visit being undertaken. Whilst in many cases a physical visit is necessary/preferable, in some cases this will not be essential if appropriate photos/videos can be provided.
Environmental Health	41	An immediate response was required from initial lockdown. Guidance and Regulations were late and lacked clarity. Subsequent changes to guidance and regulations in/out of lockdown and Tier restrictions remained the same and there was late or no further advice available. Reliance of Health & Safety at Work Act was difficult compounded by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advising covid not imminent risk.	The team stepped up admirably working evenings and weekends advising businesses and taking enforcement action where necessary. Introducing Whatsapp as an in/out board helped monitor staff movements to ensure they were safe. Use of Knowledge Hub and Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) supported decision making on activities not clearly defined. Joint working with Police.	Flexibility and agile working essential during a pandemic. Response provided the detailed actions required to be taken. Joint working with Police on enforcement.
	42	The corporate digital response to rapid home working was	staff mostly coped well with the transition with exceptions being	Agile working benefits service delivery.

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		excellent.	within Licensing team which has continued to be impacted. Issues relating to isolation and anxiety have been identified and staff members supported throughout.	
	43	Demand for cross district working, Public Health and other partners increased the workload of the team.	Funding from Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) and Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) together with Covid Marshall funding allowed for recruitment of dedicated covid compliance officers, Community Protection Officers and provided resources to deliver priorities.	Developed excellent partnership working establishing clear and strong relationships which should continue.
	44	Business as usual for environmental nuisances increased by 60% particularly fly tipping, noise and bonfires. Food inspections fell back as did other routine work creating backlogs in Environmental Health and Licensing. Community Safety work also increased.	Creative use of additional funding allowed additional recruitment into licensing team, for private sector housing related matters and to fund external contractors to assist with food hygiene inspection backlog. Auto responses on emails helped as did support from customer services particularly for taxi and Private Hire licensing.	Needed to be creative in use of funding to maximise response.

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	45	Re-opening businesses – welcoming people back onto High streets – Ambassadors and Community Protection Officers	Officers were warmly received for their visibility and support by both business and the public making people feel safer.	People felt safer – consider continuation of visible uniformed officers for environmental issues.
Finance	46	We receive a lot of paper invoices and remittances which caused issues during the early days of the pandemic as we were all working from home.	We had one member of the team come into the office to scan in all of the post for our services so all services could work from home and create electronic storage for documents rather than keeping a paper-based system.	The accounts payable function became more streamlined and quicker freeing up some of the officer's time to help in other pressure areas. Also holding invoices electronically meant that the whole council could now access invoices without having to refer to our paper folders.
	47	With the Finance Manager working full time on business grants and the loss of a senior accountant early on in the pandemic the team were under resourced and lacked leadership.	Adding additional leadership responsibilities to one of the accountants to help take some of the pressure off the Finance Manager and re-prioritising work within the team.	The additional responsibility for the accountant worked well as she led the budget and accounts process really well freeing the manager up to focus on grants. Also, we streamlined a lot of unnecessary processes and redistributed work within the team to ensure the service still ran effectively.
	48	The finance functions all overlap and working together as a team is paramount to the effective running of the service.	Finding a way to replicate the communication between team members that we had in the office took time to embed. Through using Teams channels for	We used the idea of shared Teams to replicate this across different services we communicate with often (as emails can be too onerous) and

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			different finance functions and regular team meetings we managed to keep the team communicating effectively.	now have information flows with Revenues and Benefits which is working well.
	49	The accounts and budget monitoring process requires populating a main spreadsheet with information and usually officers do an individual sheet then fill in the main spreadsheet one at a time.	With Teams and One Drive being rolled out we needed to embrace this new technology to avoid double handling of data and the use of one, master working paper. We used shared spreadsheets so we can all work on the same document at the same time.	Many of our old processes and working papers have slowly been transferred from the network drives to Office 365 based apps to allow for better functionality for multiple users on one document and to avoid duplication.
Housing	50	In the early stages of response, we were overwhelmed with information nationally, regionally and locally. There was new guidance from MHCLG, new partnership working and expectations across the County and the need to have regular catch ups.	Once set up to work remotely we had daily 'stand up' meetings to share updates and support each other.	We were able to react quickly to changing conditions, implement new processes and support each other.
	51	Staff found working from home difficult with technical problems.	Advice about remote working and sharing experiences with colleagues helped improve this.	Although much improved there are still some problems with home set ups that are likely to remain e.g. having to work on a kitchen table or around family.
	52	Staff did not foresee the effect of	Discussing how we feel and	Staff have been more

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		having difficult conversations with customers in their home setting. They felt intruded on or not able to get instant support as they would in the office.	having the opportunity to talk about cases has provided support. The Wellbeing Zone on the website has provided advice too.	comfortable working with customers at home and colleagues mindful of providing support.
	53	Rough Sleeping support approaches are based across the County with many partners needed to share information and react to changes in conditions.	A weekly County Rough Sleeper Cell was set up. Reporting mechanisms were set up to monitor data and inform commissioning of services.	The very fast changing conditions were met with regular meetings and Cell members were able to make quick decisions based on current data. Support for officers on a personal level was helpful.
Human Resources	54	Staff were re-deployed to priority areas such as the business cell and community cell. Some staff had not been exposed to difficult and emotional telephone conversations.	Support to staff health and wellbeing has been paramount. Various initiatives have been implemented including 'how to deal with difficult calls training'	Staff receiving direct awareness training to deal with emotional calls and how to cope with these.
	55	Flexibility was required at speed to respond to legislative changes and the need to fit out policies and processes to these new challenges.	Changes were made in a number of areas – for example unsocial hours, flexitime, self isolation, annual leave etc.	Our policies and processes have been developed or temporarily updated.
	56	New challenges regarding wellbeing	Debriefing calls, temporary homeworking Cardinus, involvement in county workforce group, personal protective	Survey and pulse check responses show that the vast majority of staff feel cared for and can locate the support

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			equipment (PPE).	available.
	57	All staff had to adapt quickly to remote working where some may not have had the skills necessary.	New courses were commissioned on maximising use of Microsoft Teams, Working Remotely and Managing Remote Teams.	Courses have been well received and used. In a similar situation they could be rolled out more quickly.
	58	All staff had to move to working from home very abruptly from a position where home working was sometimes seen as a perk and when people were not in the office they missed out on corporate messaging.	Developed Agile Working policy. Surveyed staff and found the vast majority now in favour of hybrid working. IT have established remote meetings for staff briefings and other training events	<p>Teams can now work more effectively remotely, working from home has demonstrated that most jobs can work well from home and there's a change in attitude about presenteeism in the office.</p> <p>The council will now be able to continue recording events and live streaming so that those working remotely, or part time can still engage.</p> <p>Future recruitment can now offer more flexibility – may help I position the council as the employer of choice and widen talent pool.</p>
	59	Staff working remotely unexpectedly coped well but did report missing seeing each other and social interaction	Culture and communications group set up across the council to address issues relating to maintaining our council culture and maintaining and improving remote communication	Ongoing work from the culture and comms group which has already achieved new social committee established, changes to staff induction, introduction of new starters in news for you and team focus articles.

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ICT	60	Existing technology did not lend itself well to remote working for all – this was already recognised in the ICT Strategy with the intention of a laptop rollout pre-Covid.	There was an increasing demand nationally for laptops A decision was made just before the first lockdown and sufficient numbers, with ancillary kit were delivered.	Over the course of three months, we completely overhauled the technology used by staff - we have invested not only in laptops but in how we can configure and deploy them quickly.
	61	Connecting all users from home when previously we had only connected up to 40 users per day.	Laptops were only part of the solution for remote working. To facilitate 200 plus users we introduced more licenses to connect remotely and added more hardware mitigate single points of failure. Use of 365 from home has risen significantly and Teams has now become an integrated tool.	The council now has a resilient and secure remote working setup.
	62	Supporting remote working issues.	The rapid change in technology led to a significant increase in ICT support requests. Early support was provided by the customer services team by taking and logging calls. This freed up critical time of the ICT staff to work on producing new technology solutions. In addition an external contractor was brought in to support the workload.	To improve the client experience a new post of first line team leader has been created who is responsible for the smooth running of the support services.
	63	Connectivity issues caused by not	Pre-pandemic, we had 2x 100MB	All staff have connectivity.

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		enough remote bandwidth.	fibre lines. One was running everything for the council the other ran the growth hub. By negotiating with our Internet Service Provider (ISP) we increased the out 100MB line to 300MB. This generated enough bandwidth to keep staff going.	
	64	Remote council meetings.	To accommodate this a number of options were tested. Corporate Zoom was chosen to run the meeting due to its ease of use and ability to manage public speakers.	Meetings were run and supported remotely during the pandemic. Zoom has proved an excellent host platform.
Internal Audit	65	The setting up of business cell required resources deployed from other services.	Internal audit team members were identified as an ideal resource because of their investigative and analytical skillset.	The team have been pivotal to the success of the scheme, paying out over £30m to businesses.
	66	The majority of staff moving to home working proved challenging in respect of some more paper based tasks.	Support provided by Business Support Team and safe system of office attendance was implemented.	Staff have embraced the electronic case management system as their primary system and have adopted a paper light system of working.
One Legal	67	Reprioritisation of workloads was required to enable staff to advise on legislative changes and the	Specific staff were designated as key contacts for clients in order to provide rapid responses to their	Timely advice and assistance to clients.

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		consequential impact on council business and the delivery of community support.	enquiries.	Certain documentation has been changed to include pandemic circumstances.
Planning Policy	68	Adapting to working from home.	Staff successfully adapted. One member found it impacted on their mental health, so they came into the office on a regular basis.	Support to staff health and wellbeing.
	69	Conservation Officer unable to undertake site visits.	Officer had to request photos, further plans, videos etc.	Officer able to process applications with further information provided through visual aids.
Property Services	70	In February 2020 the team were required to evaluate the risk profile of the building and the possible effect on services from the spread of the virus. Including the normal operating systems i.e. ventilation and heating and the ability to operate the building with fewer staff.	This was completed in a timely manner in consultation with other authorities and various regulations. This included increased air circulation, the introduction of hand sanitisers, tissue disposal points and education on handwashing prior to the lockdown government announcement.	This initial work didn't account for the severity and impact of the pandemic but allowed for the smooth mobilisation to close the offices at the end of March whilst maintaining the operation of the key services and partner services.
	71	Legislation required the leisure centre to close which triggered the change of law clause within the contract terms.	Places Leisure reacted quickly to the closure with a clear line of communication to agree the change in law and agree how the contract would operate during the pandemic.	Whilst there was a delay in the first August reopening due to a lack of understanding and preparation, lessons were quickly learnt and with the various lockdowns and restrictions constantly changing

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				through the pandemic, Places leisure have optimised the potential income and used the various government grants and furlough scheme, to minimise the cost to the authority
	72	At the start of the pandemic major legislative changes were made to the operation of cemeteries and the registration of deaths largely making a paper based process, electronic	This required major changes to the way burials were administered along with changes to the operational team onsite.	The process has now been streamlined and burials and administration continued throughout the pandemic in a timely manner. The asset manager supported the mortality cell and the property team collated and submitted the weekly data with regards to burials and capacity.
	73	All staff were required to work from home except for key staff.	Those property staff that could operate from home did so, with key staff i.e. caretakers and admin staff remaining in the office to support corporate requirements.	This worked extremely well and maintained the operation of the building for key services and partners alike.
	74	Business Grants were announced in March 2020 with considerable pressure to make payments quickly. The eligibility criteria was driven by business rates which meant the Revenues Team bore	Resources temporarily redeployed from Revenues as well as other service areas to implement an assessment process and pay grants.	Better intelligence about the business rates base and the further work needed to improve it.

Appendix 1 - COVID-19 Lessons Learnt

Service Area	Lesson learnt reference	Reality	Response	Result
Revenues & Benefits		the brunt of customer contact.		
	75	Media and some other local authorities promoting council tax 'payment holidays' resulted in increased contact.	Website updated to advise no 'payment holidays'. Residents signposted to alternative means of advice and support including the council tax reduction scheme.	Better public perception of the Council through understanding and being responsive to residents' needs.
	76	Magistrates' Court closed from March 2020 for liability order and committal hearings.	The issue of 'soft reminders' encouraging customers to engage with us to make realistic payment arrangements. Provision of support, where eligible, through the council tax reduction scheme.	Less of a reduction in income than expected.
	77	Government support packages for business and residents were delivered through council tax and business rates. This meant changes to software which had to be upgraded, tested and implemented at speed.	Deployment of new releases following testing. New procedures introduced. Website updated.	Support provided to residents and business when it was most needed.
	78	Increased use of agency staff to backfill redeployed staff. Difficulties in training new starters remotely and getting suitable equipment to them.	Sending equipment by courier to those who live a distance away. Learning new skills to enable the delivery of training remotely.	Better able to respond at speed to short term changes in demand requiring additional staff to ensure service delivery.
	79	Council Tax Hardship Fund announced in first lockdown. Increased award made later in the year.	Staff trained to make awards based on eligibility criteria. Awards changed due to changes in entitlement to council tax	Positive publicity for the Council and the opportunity to support vulnerable residents.

Appendix 1 - COVID-19 Lessons Learnt

Service Area	Lesson learnt reference	Reality	Response	Result
			reduction so it was (and still is) necessary to have strict reconciliation processes in place.	